by A historian born in the year of the rat

The Meaning of Death

One Japanese Dancing Mouse's Deepest Fear

The Meaning of Death

One Japanese Dancing Mouse's Deepest Fear

iAbout the author / Toshiaki Kiriu

Until retiring in 2010 from Kanpou, a governmental publications service station, Mr. Kiriu devoted himself to what he called order-made publishing, which comprised finding books that may not necessarily sell in large numbers but should be published, and took part in publishing about 200 books. Four years before retiring, in 2006, Mr. Kiriu helped establish the Pure Heart Grand Prize contest (sponsored by The Japan Wool Textile Co., Ltd.) with Hirotada Ototake serving as chief judge. Between 2007 and 2009, the first three years of the contest, Mr. Kiriu participated as a judge alongside Hirotada Ototake. Mr. Kiriu currently enjoys his life after retirement, helping his coworkers at UTA Book conduct operations with particular focus on publishing books on mental activities and the importance of such activities. In addition, he devotes himself to gathering information and writing books on themes of his own choice.

Books authored by Mr. Kiriu include the following:

1) *Anata no shiranai Nara no Katsuragisan—Katasuragi gaidobukku* (Undiscovered Aspects of Mount Katsuragi—A Guidebook to Mount Katsuragi); 2) *Boku no naze, watashi no naze—watashitachi wa naze umaretekitano* (My Mystery and Your Mystery—Why We Were Born); 3) *Kojitachi no runesansu—Tomasu no monogatari* (A Renaissance of Orphans—The Tale of Thomas); 4) *Toki wo koete tsutaetai koto* (A Story I Want to Pass on for Generations); and 5) *Suetsugu Masanao to Murayama Touan* (Masanao Suetsugu and Touan Murayama [Winner of a Local History Research Contest]).

Copylight ©2021 by Toshiaki Kiriu
All rights reserved

This edition published by Editing Studio DEP
Manufactured in Japan

Translated by Kowa Makimura

The Meaning of Death
One Japanese Dancing Mouse's Deepest Fear

Contents:

Preface: The great famine of the Yōwa period 4
Column: Mr./Ms. Y's experience (Kumamoto Prefecture) 14

Chapter One: The Deepest Fear of One Japanese Dancing Mouse
1. Death felt by a history nerd—a message from my past self 18
2. A Zazen meditation meeting at Ginganji (or Zuiryuji) temple 44
3. A charitable calligraphy event at Ginganji temple 55
4. A strange and mysterious ancient document 61
5. Learning about the study of the heart 65
Column: Mr./Ms. O's experience (Mie Prefecture) 74

Chapter Two: Is suffering infectious?
1. Can one learn of his/her state after death while still alive? 78
2. Reflection on one's mother 87
3. Reflection on one's mistake of asking others for salvation 91
4. Reincarnation of lifetimes 98
Column: Mr./Ms. O's experience (Kyoto Prefecture) 101

Chapter Three: A Letter to Professor Hameroff
1. Where lost spirits go 104
2. The world after death according to the quantum mind hypothesis 110
3. A letter to Professor Hameroff 114
4. The turn of consciousness and the purpose of life 121
Message from the world of consciousness, received by Ms. Kayo Shiyokawa 127
Column: Mr./Ms. U's experience (Shiga Prefecture) 130

Chapter Four: Flow of Consciousness
1. Meditation on yourself existing in the dimension of death 134
2. Natural disasters 141
3. Moving onto the next dimension 147
Column: Mr./Ms. S's experience (Nara Prefecture) 150

Afterword: Momo, the bottlenose dolphin 153

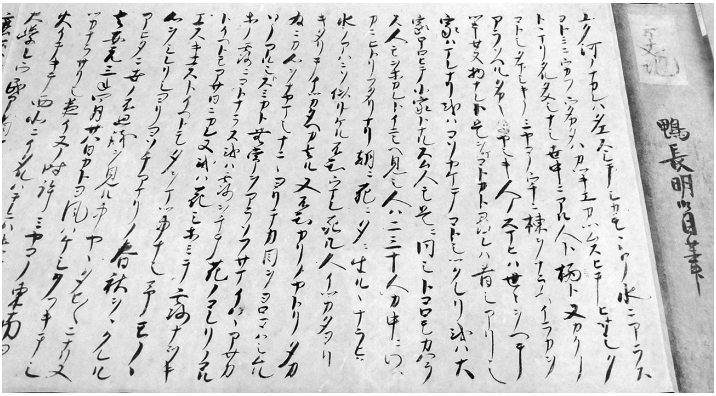
Preface

The great famine of the Yōwa period

I know this is a strange statement to begin a book with, but I would like you to imagine what Kyoto was like in the final years of the 12th century, around which time is when The Tale of the Heike is set around and Taira no Kiyomura died due to an illness. Kyoto was reduced to ruins due to famine, a plague, a catastrophic fire, and natural disasters, including dust devils.

The people back then changed the name of the era to Yōwa, hoping that doing so would put an end to their series of unlucky events. However, their lack of luck persisted. Springs and summers were dry, but autumns were struck by downpours accompanied by strong wind, with years of no harvest, which thereby rendered the cultivation of fields in the spring and planting of seeds in the summer meaningless. Subsequently, people abandoned their villages and homes, choosing to live in the mountains instead, where they practiced various rituals, such as praying to deities without success.

Back then, when it came to resources, Kyoto was entirely dependent on rural regions, where by then resources had already been depleted. It was a matter of time before people lost tolerance. Hoping to live another day, they tried to buy food and offered deals



Manuscript of Hōjōki by Kamo no Chōmei
(preserved at Kawai Shrine of Shimogamo Shrine)

at prices way above what they would have otherwise needed to pay. However, hardly anyone showed any interest, and when people did, they demanded to reduce the value of money and raise that of food. The streets of Kyoto were full of beggars crying in sorrow.

The people of Kyoto somehow made it through another year, hoping that the next one will be better. However, instead of putting an end to famine, the following year added a plague, worsening the situation. Life in Kyoto was nothing like it used to be. By this time, most people could no longer even move; they just laid down on the ground, waiting to die. There were also some who still refused to die. These people wore hats and fancy clothes but could barely walk. They dragged their legs, visiting one house after another to beg for food. However, after some time, they became senile,

Frame of the Siddhaṃ script character " 𑖀 " (a)
hung in Ninna-ji temple's five-story pagoda

and sooner or later, they fell and died as well. Against walls made of mud and along the roads laid countless number of corpses of those who starved to death. Since there was no one to dispose of such corpses, the smell of rotting bodies imbued the city. Corpses also occupied the roads along rivers, preventing carriages from traveling out.

The preceding paragraphs are somewhat loosely translated excerpts from Kamo no Chōmei's Hōjōki. Subsequently, in response to a request for help by Ryugyo—a Buddhist monk at Ninna-ji temple—groups of Buddhist monks came to the city of Kyoto. Covering their mouths and noses with cloth, the groups of monks divided into pairs and went from one corpse to another

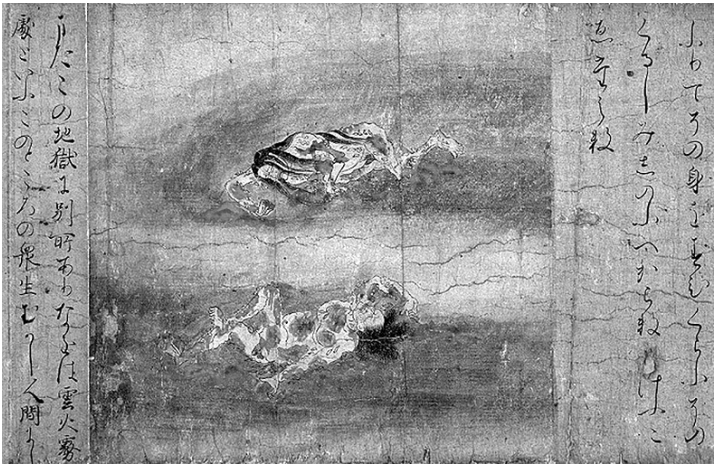
throughout Kyoto. One looked into their faces and wrote a Siddhaṃ script character—" 𑖀 " (a)—on their foreheads while the other kept count in a notebook.

They wrote the character " 𑖀 " (a) in hope of helping the victims of famine and plague connect with Buddha.

Records tell us that the monks spent two months, April and May, on taking care of such corpses by traveling across the region south of Ichijo, north of Kujo, west of Kyogoku, and east of Suzaku streets. In present-day terms, the area they covered could be described as Rakuchu, because it comprises approximately five kilometers between Ichijo-dori (or Ichijo-modoribashi street) in the north and Kujo-dori (or the street on the south of Tō-ji temple) in the south and about 2.5 kilometers between Senbon-dori (or the street on the east of Nijō Station on JR West Railway's Sanin Main Line) in the west and Teramachi-dori (or the street also known as the Teramachi electronic-shop district) in the east.

The monks wrote the character " 𑖀 " (a) on the foreheads of more than 42,300 corpses, which included in addition to ones that had rotten, others partly eaten by dogs. Just imagining looking into the faces of such corpses and writing " 𑖀 " on their foreheads, likely with shivering hands, makes me feel ghastly and tremble.

I began this book with this appalling story because I believe the Japanese people's memories of this mass death during the Yōwa period influences their image of the world after death.



Hell Scroll (preserved at Tokyo National Museum)

The Hell Scroll and the Scroll of Hungry Ghosts were also produced in the Yōwa period, and they took as their model, the Yōwa famine, burning it into our memories as the world after death.

However, although the world after death exists as a concept, not a single person has ever returned from the so-called “world after death,” so there is no way of telling if it actually exists, and if it does, what the place truly is like. As if to separate the two states of life and death, we invented ceremonies for seeing off the dead. The idea of commemorating the dead works well under normal times. However, once our lives are threatened by wars, natural disasters, famine, and other emergencies, the view of death as something to celebrate with ceremonies suddenly shreds to pieces.

When actually faced by death, we switch to seeing it as something horrifying.

Could it be that the world after death that we are able to feel when alive is only the state of those suffering in a world resembling the scrolls?

The first document that ever depicted the world after death in Japan is the Kojiki.

The story of Izanagi and Izanami creating Japan goes as follows. Izanami, the wife of Izanagi, gives birth to the fire god and burns herself in the process, subsequently dying because of the burn. Unable to overcome her death, her husband, Izanagi, travels to the Yomi no kuni, or the world after death, to find her.

Izanagi finds Izanami in the world after death and says to her, “Will you please come home with me? I feel very lonely without you. Besides, remember that we haven’t yet finished building the country of Japan? Come on let’s go home!”

To this, Izanami however replies, “I’ve already eaten the food of the world after death, so I’m not supposed leave this world.” Yet, her husband seems unable to give up, so she tells him, “Alright, then, I’ll go and ask the god of the world after death whether I can leave. But please promise me that you won’t open the door to god’s palace while I’m inside asking for permission,” and then she enters the palace.

Izanagi waits and waits, practically living in front of the

palace. However, his wife does not return. Worried that something may have happened to her, Izanagi does the one thing he was asked not to do and enters the palace.

There he sees his wife dead and rotten with maggots coming out of her corpse.

The love he felt for her changes to fear and hatred in an instant, and Izanagi flees from the palace, crawling. Izanami, angry that Izanagi saw herself dead and infested by maggots, chases after her husband, crying, “I asked you to wait for me outside. Why did you enter the palace!”

Escaping safely from the palace, Izanagi closes the boundary between life and death with a large rock called the senbiki no ishi (the rock that draws the line), and due to his belief that the world after death is filthy, he performs his own rituals that he believes should purify him.

As his rituals, he washes his left eye, which gives birth to Amaterasu. Washing his right eye gives birth to Tsukuyomi-no-Mikoto, and doing the same with his nose gives birth to Susanoo-no-Mikoto. Thus, the god of Japan, Amaterasu, resulted from purifying the filth of the world after death, and Japanese mythology originated from the attempt to separate life from death.

The world after death seen from the eyes of the Japanese, in other words, is a world of filth. Toribeno and Adashino—regions in Kyoto which exist to this day—used to be places where corpses

were disposed of. Corpses would accumulate and rot there, giving off terrible smells, or would be hung from trees and fed to birds. These scenes must have given those who saw them the impression that death is something to be horrified of.

The Yōwa period of course is not the only time when mass death and unnatural deaths occurred in large numbers due to natural disasters and wars. In a sense, it is not an exaggeration to say that unnatural mass death is the history of humankind. For instance, in addition to the Yōwa famine, in 1231 (during the Kamakura period), there was the Kangi Famine. Refugees from nearby regions fled to Kyoto, subsequently died, and their corpses filled the roads of the city. The famine is said to have killed at least one-third of the country's population. Additionally, in 1461, the Kanshō famine struck the entire nation, causing at least 82,000 deaths in Kyoto alone. Furthermore, during the 250-year governance of the Tokugawa shogunate, there were the Great Kan'ei Famine in 1642, the Kyōhō famine in 1732, the Hōreki famine in 1756, and the Great Tenmei Famine in 1783. These were caused by typhoons, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, fires, and wars, burning the fear of witnessing mass deaths each time in our hearts.

From there on, I assume such fear of death became passed on from the memories of individuals to all humankind as a species, and death became some undesirable thing to fear.

This book does not discuss whether a world after death exists

or not. The conclusion of it is that we exist not only while alive but also after death, or i.e., that we are consciousnesses.

In other words, the book claims that there is a world after death.

However, the image of death that I just described above is that of the Japanese. It is one produced from the perspective that our physical bodies are what we are, and that losing our physical bodies is thereby a horrifying event. Our image of hell is a product developed by such religions as Buddhism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism, which image then likely gave rise to its opposites, such as Sukhavati, or Western Paradise, and similar concepts. I know the Eastern and Western worlds have different images of the world after death; but they share one thing—they were developed by the living.

This book is based on the perspective that we are not our physical bodies but are consciousnesses, and from that perspective, it aims to reexamine the world after death, or i.e., the meaning of death.

Therefore, if you disagree with the preceding perspective, then you should probably stop reading. The following is an abstract of this book to help you decide whether or not to continue reading.

Chapter one is a short story about myself—a history nerd—trying to escape from the fear of death by turning my attention to matters of the past. Chapter two is about how I came to meet Tomekichi Taike, then a principal of a public high school in Osaka, and received his help in facing my fear and was introduced to a

book titled The Flow of Consciousness. The chapter also touches on how I learned from Tomekichi Taike to reflect on my heart with the aim of finding out why I still feared to die after learning from him how to face the fear of death.

Chapter three, titled "A Letter to Professor Hameroff" is a little different. It introduces the world after death as studied in quantum mechanics, one of the cutting-edge fields of modern physics. The chapter discusses how science is approaching the mystery of our spirit and then points out that theories suggested by scientists of quantum mechanics lack the perspective of turning negative energies to positive ones and how that could be done through self-reflection.

Chapter four outlines the journey of consciousnesses by touching on the transition to the next dimension, which is what "The Flow of Consciousness" is and is the next step that consciousnesses will take.

Between each chapter, the book provides columns, written by different people, on their thoughts on facing death.

So that is a broad outline of this book. If you bought this book, interested in its title but without skimming thought it first and are disappointed, I am sorry but please consider it as an accident and read the whole thing anyway.

It may be an accident, but it won't kill you.

Column: /Ms. Y's experience

The very first time I thought about death was when I was two years old.

Back then, my family actively practiced Buddhism. There was more than 10 Buddhist statues; we had all types, ranging from wooden, metal, and ceramic to scrolls.

Both my grandmother and mother offered water, tea, rice, and flowers to our Buddhist altars and chanted the Heart Sutra. While watching them do so, I became interested in death and asked them what it meant to die.

The answer I received was, "We all die when we get old. So we will die before you do." Next, I asked them, "Where was I before I was born?" and they answered, "I don't know. But I guess some place similar to where we go after we die."

I then asked my mother, "You mean you don't remember?" and she said, "No, I don't remember."

Subsequently, I thought the world after death and the world before birth could be the same and that I might be able to recall the latter, since I had to have been there just two years ago. I thought I might be able to remember what it was like by tracing back my memories and that it should be easier for me to do so than for my mother and grandmother. So I tried.

As I closed my eyes and tried to remember what it was like before being born, darkness fell before my eyes

and it felt like my body was gone. The darkness gradually grew deeper and it began to feel as if I was about to be swallowed by it from behind.

In the dimension of death that I felt, I had no physical body or any sense of touch. There was only unlimited darkness. I know my physical body did not exist in the dimension of death; the only thing that existed was my consciousness. I also remember feeling that I need to stop trying to remember any further back than that point; otherwise I would become unable to return to the physical world.

When I opened my eyes, I saw a Buddhist statue.

I was scared by the darkness and mysterious power I felt were being radiated from the Buddhist statue. However, having nothing else to ask for help, I surrendered to the statue.

I was only two years old at the time, but I already knew this family, including myself, had no other existence to seek help from other than Buddha.

Now I know asking to be saved by any entity—god(s), deities, etc.—from the fear of death is meaningless, because there is no such thing. But at the time, I had no other option.

As the preceding story illustrates, I have always had doubts about believing in any religion, but I now realize that, at the same time, I had been dependent on one.

(Kumamoto Prefecture)

Chapter 1

The Deepest Fear of One Japanese Dancing Mouse

1. Death felt by a history nerd —a message from my past self

Today, we live not in the Yōwa period but the peaceful Reiwa period. Our memories of mass death due to atomic bombs and air raids are long behind us.

There are no famine victims dragging their legs from one house to another to beg for food; nor are there mothers dying of radiation or starvation while breastfeeding their babies. There are no tyrants who unjustly order ritual suicide; nor are there incendiary bombs falling out of the sky. We tend to complain of the economy as being bad, but in reality, the world is thriving more than ever; we have only become so used to world peace that we take the absence of unnatural mass death and unjust murder for granted.

Despite the presence of death not being felt as close as it used to in the past, we still fear it. Most people try not to think of death, and in an effort to forget that death is inevitable, they indulge themselves in such everyday life activities as their business, hobbies, and community work, keeping themselves as busy as possible like a Japanese dancing mouse.

Please allow me to talk about myself a little. When I was a child and not yet in school, I thought about death so often that it made me sick. I was a child, so of course, I do not mean I entertained the

concept of death like a philosopher would. Ideas such as “What happens to us after we die?” and “How terribly do we suffer at the last moments before we die,” as well as similar thoughts, kept crossing my mind, until I would come to the conclusion that I should switch to convincing myself that death is unworthy of attention now, since it is still a long way down the road, and I would intentionally switch to thinking about something fun.

However, almost every night after nightfall, scary thoughts would revisit me, such as “What if I die in my sleep?” and “What if I never wake up again.” So I would try my best to stay awake, but of course eventually fall asleep.

Then, as I grew older, death became a distant concept, as if I thought it would never occur after all. It was as if I succeeded in dispelling my fear of death and was living entirely in high spirits. However, the fear of death had not disappeared. It would find its way back into my heart every time it had a chance, and I would be reminded that the fear was deep-rooted.

Subsequently, when I was in my early 20s, my fear of death finally erupted, while I was filming a video in Mount Asama.

At the time, I was into films and every time I felt the fear of death, I turned to watching movies, trying not to think of death. Subsequently, my interest in films led to me to the world of filmmaking, and I began working in the advertising industry, producing commercials and promotional videos. “The last film I

helped produce was the Seven Samurai" is what I would like to say. It would be truly neat if I could say that, but no, I was never part of the crew that produced that film. So what do you think I helped produce?

I will give you some clues. The location we choose for our film was Tsumagoi Village in Gunma Prefecture. The film was set in the Edo period around the time when there was the Tenmei eruption of Mount Asama, and the village was about to become swallowed by a pyroclastic flow. These descriptions may give you the impression that the film I helped produce was a feature-length historical drama after all, but actually it was a commercial for an agricultural tractor.

Me and my production crew had an opportunity to talk with a local senior. Although we told him that we were there to film a commercial for an agricultural tractor, the old man kept telling us about the time when Mount Asama erupted. We told him that hearing about the eruption was not going to help us with filming our commercial, but he kept talking about the disaster.

However, being a history nerd, in addition to willingly listening to the old man's story, I actually asked questions about the eruption and also asked him to take me to the places that he referred to. I also spent some time on visiting areas relating to the eruption of Mount Asama to gather information, causing myself to sometimes be late for meetings with my production crew members, who of course disapproved of being late for irrelevant reasons.

Eventually, I upset our producer, who was known for being extremely serious.

Thus, the following information relating to Mount Asama was gathered by myself paying a price, so although I know it still may not be a good enough reason for you to read through, I hope you will.

July 4: The ground around Mount Asama shook violently. Sliding doors juddered violently, and nearby villagers seriously considered evacuating. Earthquakes continued to intensify, toppling even strongly-built houses and bending fittings to the degree that the houses could collapse at any given moment. To avoid being fallen on, villagers sought refuge in nearby fields and forests. Afraid that the shaking could crack the ground, instead of taking refuge in the fields, some villagers with babies and elderly family members cut down bamboo forests, built houses there, and moved with their belongings. Aware that the situation was abnormal, others had their families move to safer regions, such as Kōzuke Province and Musashi Province.

July 5: With another earthquake that occurred around 9 p.m., earthquakes began hitting with shorter intervals, happening both during the day and night and causing small houses to collapse. Many villagers, both male and female and the elderly and the young, were injured by these earthquakes and had to run about 8 to 12 kilometers to reach safer locations. However, records tell us that all regions within 80 to 120 kilometers from Mount Asama were as damaged

by earthquakes as were areas closer to the epicenter. The cries of villagers, praying for their lives, could be heard throughout the regions.

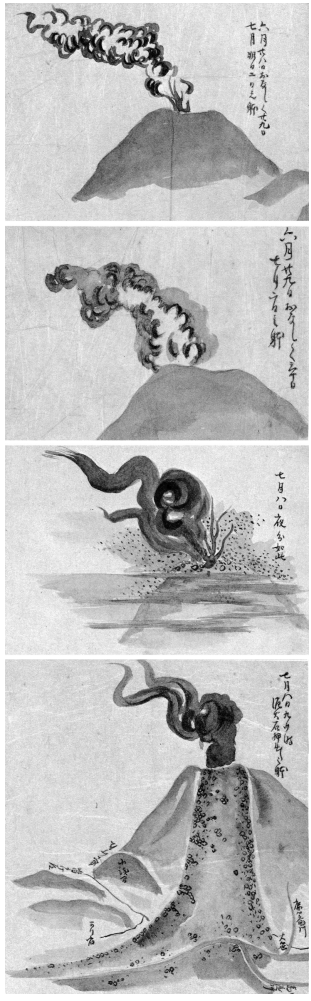
July 6: In the morning, riverbanks collapsed, toppling houses nearby and carrying them away. Subsequently, large amounts of sandstone fell from the sky. Mount Asama was covered by black clouds and smoke. The sky was dark even during the day. From the top of the mountain burst a couple streaks of blue and red fire. Some minutes later, a large sound resembling a roar was heard from the direction of Mount Asama, and black clouds shrouded the sky above the villages nearby and then filled hills and valleys, completely enveloping the area with darkness. Subsequently, boiling water poured out like a river from the top of Mount Asama. Crying that being chased by actual river water had been better than boiled water, villagers saved themselves by fleeing to higher grounds, including treetops. Those who could not run fast enough to reach higher grounds in time burned their feet but still tried to escape on all four limbs. Those who died, being burned by the boiling water, were mostly the elderly and children.

In addition, the bursting fire burned boulders and trees. Even large trees were uprooted, which broke into pieces in midair before dropping from the sky. Some people were burned by the fire head to toe, while trying to escape. Although enshrouded by complete darkness, the area underneath become lit up like daytime when

boulders and trees on fire fell from the sky. To avoid being burned by the fire while trying to escape, villagers covered their heads with pans and pots; however, the fire still made it through small openings, such as between their clothes. Those to whom this happened could not stand the heat; they took off their clothes and ran for their lives bare naked.

Because the eruption occurred completely out of the blue, villagers had no time to move their livestock to safer places, so some were abandoned while others were set loose. Nevertheless, these cattle and horse were also hit by burning boulders and ran for their lives. Therefore, villagers, who were already in a chaos without any sense of direction even before they were joined by their livestock, came to be killed by their own cattle and horse, being stomped on or being bumped into by their cattle and pierced by their cattle's horns.

Wild animals, also surrounded by



Sketch of the eruption of Mount Asama

fire and smoke, ran for their lives. In a panic, they kicked and/or bit villagers, killing them as a result.

Then, a burning boulder about three meters large fell from the sky, killing many villagers in an instant.

Completely in a panic, some villagers sought refuge on higher grounds while others sought refuge on lower lands. Consequently, villagers ran into each other. They stepped on or tried to push one another out their way, killing each other by accident. Some villagers ran 12 to 16 kilometers in complete darkness, arriving alive at Kutsukake (now, Naka Karuizawa).

July 7: Mount Asama let out a roar that sounded 100 times larger than those heard until the day before and the ground shook 1,000 times more violently, with which lava burst out from the crater. The pyroclastic flow traveled down to a point about eight kilometers from the mountaintop, burning Rokurigahara in the process. In Isezaki this day, while darkness enveloped the region throughout the day, lightning and thunder stormed throughout its entirety.

July 8: The sun shined for the first time after the eruption. Mount Asama continued to spark flames, but villagers felt relieved. In the morning at Kambara Village, villagers picked up rocks that had fallen on their fields or enjoyed an early nap. However, around 10 a.m., they felt an intense rumbling soar from beneath. Another pyroclastic flow occurred, which is today known as the Kambara Pyroclastic Flow. Within 10 minutes or so, the pyroclastic flow

Picture of the Mount Asama erupting

traveled from the crest wall to Kambara Village, swallowing the entire Village, or all 93 houses that comprised it. The population, which had until then comprised 597 people, shrunk by 466 in an instant, saving only some people who luckily had some business to take care of outside the Village and others who were just extraordinarily lucky (because they lived slightly off the course of the pyroclastic flow, they were able to take refuge in Kannon temple, located on top of a hill). However, 170 of the Village's 200 horses died due to the pyroclastic flow.

The pyroclastic flow caused Agatsuma River to overflow, which then backwashed, causing floods upstream to carry houses

Mother and daughter victims excavated at Kambara Village

and corpses into Tone River. The flow, which struck Kambara Village and traveled into Agatsuma River, is estimated to have totaled 100 million cubic meters, or 200 million tons. The number of houses swallowed by the Kambara Pyroclastic Flow is estimated to have surpassed 1,000; the number of deaths is estimated to have totaled at least 1,124 to 1,624.

Within the same day, after causing the preceding amount of damage by spitting out fire and rocks, Mount Asama emitted more lava. This flow of lava, which traveled north and stopped six kilometers from the crater, had a higher viscosity and thereby took more time to flow. The course it took overlapped with the west edge of that of the Kambara Pyroclastic Flow. Villagers called this flow of lava the Onioshidashi (the push of a troll), and it became the last of its series. Although black smoke, sand, and ashes continued to be emitted until the end of October, Mount Asama stopped both erupting and rumbling on this day.

However, the Tenmei eruption was followed by a more horrifying disaster. Its fine grain volcanic ashes, which filled the

Reproductions of the mother and daughter victims, based on their remains

atmosphere and combined with the ashes resulting from the eruption of Mount Laki in Northern Europe—which occurred around the same time—shrouded the northern hemisphere, causing a great reduction in temperature for over two years. Consequently, this caused a great famine in Japan, centering around its north east region, killing around 300,000 to 500,000 people; when combined with those killed by causes relating to the earthquakes and floods due to the eruption of Mount Asama, the number of victims surpasses one million.

Between 1979 and 1981, three excavation projects were carried out along the foothills of Mount Asama, particularly around the

region that used to be Kambara Village. One of these excavations, conducted around the stone steps of Kambara Kannon temple, led to the finding of the corpses seen in the photo above. The stone steps of Kambara Kannon temple, remaining today, are only 15, while there used to be 150. Around the 50th stone step were found the corpses of two females, which are believed to be those of a mother and daughter, since they had died in a position where one lay on top of the other. Based on their skulls, the faces of the two victims were reproduced by Hisashi Suzuki, a professor emeritus of the University of Tokyo. The two are assumed to have died due to a lahar flow while the daughter climbed the stone steps, carrying her mother on her back to seek refuge in the temple.

I had an opportunity to see the reproductions of their faces at Tsumagoi Folk Museum. I remember feeling something strange, thinking the two did not look like local farmers but like people from the cities.

Right now, while typing these sentences, remembering how I felt at the museum gives me the shivers. I am actually telling myself to calm down; otherwise I might scream. But back then when I visited the museum as a member of my film crew, I did not feel any shivers or urge to scream. I remember looking forward to filming the commercial, simply thinking, “Alright, we got the information we needed, let’s go and join the filming team!”

However, just when we were about to begin filming, a strange

thing happened.

Producing a commercial for an agricultural tractor requires renting a farm field to show the tractor actually being operated. Since we wanted to show how the tractor actually carries out each stage of cultivation, we needed to use an actual field over a number of days, and the field needed to be same one. However, during the night of the first day of filming, it rained hard, rendering the field we rented useless for the next day's filming. Therefore, we had no choice but to rent another one in a region where the weather forecast said it would be sunny for at least enough days for the filming. After finding one, we started cultivating all over again. However, against our hope, it started to rain again during the night of the first day of filming and the rain continued for a few days. The filming required also renting super-telephoto lens, the contract period of which we had to keep extending due to the rain. We also hired a number of staff from the film industry as our filming and lighting crew. Since they were not our own staff, the longer it kept raining, the harder it became to ask them to wait for a sunny day. Eventually, the external crew members began to pressure the production team to perform some exorcism rituals, which they called "weather festivals."

"Weather festivals" was what they called banquets, where the entire staff would have all the fun they could get from eating, drinking, and singing. Much of our budget had already been spent on renting fields, equipment, and accommodation and on paying

salaries.

Yet, I told myself, “Alright, whatever!” and granted their request, upon which they cheered, “Great! Mr. Kiryu, you’re the best guy in Japan!”

Although I kept a cheerful smile all along while the banquets were held, contrary to their liveliness, some worrisome feeling kept looming over me. I felt alright during the day when I was with everyone, but come nightfall, the mysterious worrisome feeling kept revisiting me, making me want to abandon the entire commercial production project and just run away.

My worrisome feeling peaked during the night of the day immediately before the weather forecast said sunny days will return starting the next day.

I remember waking up around two o’clock a.m. bothered by something. Unable to figure out what it was, I went outside, looked up, and saw that the sky was full of stars. I remember thinking that day was going to be a sunny one. I sat down on a small hill and went over our plans for filming that day. I remember thinking I left out nothing; every small detail of our plan was in my head. I was ready for that day’s filming. There was nothing I needed to be worried about. Yet, the worrisome feeling kept looming over me. I went back inside, where I could hear everyone sleeping, but the feeling only increased. Finally, I could not take it anymore; I left a note and ran away.

But don't get me wrong. I do not mean I went insane or completely lost myself. The state I was in was not anything like that. I was perfectly aware of every action I took, and I performed each of them very calmly.

So as I described just now, unable to deal with my unknown fear, I ran away. However, two days later, I decided I needed to resume living everyday life and returned to my workplace in Osaka.

At my workplace, my supervisor told me that he wanted me to tell him what happened so that he would be able to help others if the same thing were to happen to them. I thought he had a point, but I still had no idea what happened to myself that night.

I know most other people would be able to handle themselves under similar circumstances. However, I could not. What was that mysterious worrisome feeling that came over me? I myself could not understand why I ran away. After thinking about what I had done, I decided to take a month off and "ran away" for the second time.

I was not thinking about killing myself. Instead, I just wanted to go someplace where no one knew me and spend some time on trying to figure out what had happened to my heart that night. In doing so, for some unknown reason, I chose to go to Mount Osore (lit. Fear), located in Shimokita Peninsula. I may have subconsciously thought, "In order to figure out this one, I need to put myself in such a deserted place as Mount Osore, known as the world of the dead."

I took a night bus to Akita Prefecture, where I stayed one night. On the following day, I took the first morning train to Aomori Prefecture.

I took a tour around Shimokita Peninsula and eventually arrived at Mount Osore. However, no deep emotions arose; nor did I find the answer to my question. That day, I spent the night at a rustic guest house in Shimokita Peninsula. The roof of the guest house was made of corrugated galvanized iron, against which I heard the sea breeze blow. I also heard the sounds of waves and the wind while listening to which I fell asleep. On the following day, I traveled south and visited Akkadō, a solutional cave in Iwate Prefecture, one of the places I always wanted to see.

That day, when I arrived at the guest house where I had planned to stay and had reservations for, I was told that my father had called from Osaka. Thinking back now, I wonder how he could have known that I would be staying there. I imagine he must have found the train timetable I forgot to take with me, in which I had done some underlining, indicating where I would be going. I hesitated a little whether to call home, but after a while, I decided to make the call.

My father picked up the phone. He sounded like when he does when he is trying to calm himself down. All he said was, “Come home as soon as possible.” From behind his voice, I could also hear my mother shouting, “Don’t kill yourself Toshiaki! Don’t do it!”

I hang up and left the guest house. Akkadō did not accept guests

due to the cave being full of water, which was caused by rain that had fallen the night before. Near the entry to the solutional cave was a small beer bar, so I decided to have a drink there. Inside the bar were a couple younger people, likely locals because they were talking with the bartender in a way that showed they knew each other quite well. I did not feel like talking to anyone, so I kept drinking alone. I drank and drank, but no matter how much I drank I could not forget hearing my mother shout, "Don't kill yourself Toshiaki!" I decided to return home the next day and left the bar. Even after I returned to the guest house and tried to sleep, I still remembered my mother telling me not to commit suicide.

The next morning, I left Iwate on a train. However, I had three hours to wait until the next train bound for Osaka. But I bought a ticket anyway, almost immediately after which I remembered that there was Mount Yudono nearby, so I decided to find a taxi.

I used to go to a photography school. Back then, there was a time I was interested in Japanese Buddhist mummies called sokushinbutsu, which is a methodical discipline inspired by Maitreya-nātha. The discipline teaches bigu, or grain avoidance, used as a form of passive suicide, or starvation death. Those who practice sokushinbutsu and thereby become Buddhist mummies do so in order to leave their physical bodies behind in this world in a way that they believe they could be saved by Maitreya-nātha, who is said to reborn into the world 5.67 billion years from his death. Unlike

Sokushinbutsu, Japanese Buddhist mummy, of Tetsumonkai-shonin

Egyptian mummies, which are processed into their states after death, those who practice sokushinbutsu ensure that by the time they die, their bodies are in a state ideal for mummification by first avoiding the five grains, followed by avoidance of the ten grains, and then by complete avoidance of all food sources except water, which will allow them to lose all body fat and also rid themselves of unnecessary germs. After they achieve this state, they move onto a procedure called dochunyutei, where they are put into a coffin alive and buried. The coffins are equipped with bamboo straws to allow them to breathe. In addition, the coffins are equipped with bells so that those undergoing the discipline of sokushinbutsu can let those outside the coffin know whether they are still alive or not.

After some years following the last ring of the bell, the coffin will be unburied, and if the person who underwent the discipline is successfully mummified, they will be called a Katamari-botoke (lit. hardened Buddha) and be worshipped by others in his/her Danka (or family financially supporting the relevant temple).

Back in college, I wanted to base my graduation project on the

theme of Maitreya-nātha and sokushinbutsu. There is an expression called the archaic smile, where the upper half of a person's face is expressionless, but his/her mouth is smiling. Archaic smiles of Maitreya-nātha Bodhisattvas are mysterious because they are said to convey either warmth or coldness depending on how one interprets their smiles. I felt an indescribable irrationality from the Buddhist mummies' expressions, smiling yet suffering at the same time, and therefore wanted to base my graduation project on them.

However, being a normal student, I did not have enough money to travel to places and take pictures of the Buddhist mummies, so I gathered as much information as I could, and with that information, put together the best graduation project I possibly could.

One of the mountains famous for having been chosen by those who underwent the discipline of sokushinbutsu was Mount Yudono.

Since I came this close to Mount Yudono, I felt like had to see the Buddhist mummies before returning to Osaka, so I spoke with one of the taxi drivers who had their cars parked in front of the station, waiting for customers. I did not know the exact location of Mount Yudono, so I asked the driver whether I had enough time and money to make a round-trip. The driver was nice and agreed to take me to Churen temple, which was located at the foot of Mount Yudono.

The taxi crossed Bonji River and entered a village named Oami. It then stopped in front of the main hall of Churen temple. I

tried to open the door to the main hall; however, it was locked. So I said loudly, “Hello!”. Then, from below behind me, I heard someone say, “Yes?” I turned around. The road that led up to the main hall was slanted on one side, in which direction there was a field. The person who replied was a farmer.

According to the farmer, the abbot also worked as a farmer and at the moment he was working at his own field. The farmer also told me that the family in charge of looking after the temple lives down the road.

Until then I only saw pictures and read of Buddhist mummies, but after going through a little more trouble, I finally got to see the real thing with my own eyes.

There I saw the Buddhist mummy of Tetsumonkai-shonin in a beautiful garb, leaning forward as if still in pain, while also surrounded by a number of panels describing the discipline of sokushinbutsu that he underwent.

Of all the Maitreya-nātha Bodhisattvas existing as Buddhist mummies today, Tetsumonkai came from the lowest social class, which is considered to be that of river-boat carriers. According to lore, Tetsumonkai‘s secular name was Tetsu Sunada. He worked as a river-boat carrier, carrying boats across Seiryuji River. One day, he got into a fight with a official over a woman working at a Yūkaku brothel, killed the official, and sought sanctuary in Churen temple. Subsequently, he became a monk at the age of 25, and at the age of

59, he began practicing bigu, or grain avoidance, which continued for three years until he died of starvation. Tetsumonkai is said to have traveled across various places between the Kanto and Tohoku regions.

On December 8, 1829, Tetsumonkai, now skin and bones as a result of grain avoidance, caught a cold and died before being buried alive in a coffin. His corpse was washed with sea water, before being mummified by being hung from the ceiling and dried with heat produced by numerous candles. The person who showed me around and told me about Tetsumonkai was an old man and gave me the shivers with his descriptions of the Buddhist mummy he kindly provided.

After telling me about Tetsumonkai, the old man left the main hall, and I was left alone with the mummy of Tetsumonkai.
Standing there alone felt as if the time had stopped and I was a member of the dead.

I was so impressed by this experience that one day years later, the Buddhist mummy of Tetsumonkai appeared in my dreams, and this came to be the beginning of a mysterious relationship with Tetsumonkai, which would last for quite a while. The Buddhist mummy began appearing in my dreams rather often. The dream I would see of Tetsumonkai would follow roughly the following pattern.

The setting could be anywhere. Sometimes it was some place in Japan, other times it was somewhere in one of the deserts in the Middle East. Regardless of where, I would always be lost, wandering about, and eventually reach a cave where I would find the Buddhist mummy of Tetsumonkai enshrined. In my dream, I know the path I choose will lead to where the Buddhist mummy is and I would think, "No. I don't want to go there anymore." However, regardless of how much I tried to avoid running into the mummy again, I would end up with Tetsumonkai. The frequency at which I would see such a dream would reach once a day and even twice a day at the highest. There were times I completely forgot about the Buddhist mummy; however, the dream would revisit me when most unexpected, and I would wake up sweating profusely. The experience of finally forgetting about the mummy, yet remembering it subconsciously, and then being reminded of it one day in my dream would reoccur repeatedly.

After returning to Osaka from the Tohoku region, I quit working at my film production company. What did I do after quitting? I decided to enter college. The producer I mentioned earlier, who was known as being extremely serious when it came to film production—his name was Shinji Fuji—one day told me, "I heard that you never went to college. I don't care if you fool around or study hard, but you should experience spending four years at a college," the recalling of which helped me make up my mind.

Mr. Fuji was special to me. He used to work at a television company before joining our film production company, around which time I also joined.

Mr. Fuji told me that at his former workplace, he was known as “Mr. Serious Fuji.” He also said that young female television personalities were always afraid of him, and he seemed to be proud of the fact that he took part in filming I Want to Be a Shellfish, starring Frankie Sakai. I do not know why but he really looked after me, and we would often go and have fun together at members-only clubs. Every time at such clubs, Mr. Fuji would start telling hostesses that people are supposed to work during the day and supposed to take a break once the sun sets—in other words, he would tell them they should not be working at nightclubs. He would then begin telling them that he is known as “Mr. Serious Fuji” and that he filmed I Want to Be a Shellfish.

As he himself often said, he was not very good at managing his money.

One time he asked me, “Kiryu, do you have any extra money?”

I answered, “I have only little but enough to lend you some.”

Then he said, “Thanks,” and handed me a note that said to go to the bank and where to bring the money I can lend him.

So I went to the bank and then delivered the money where I was told. It was a sarakin place (i.e., a finance company run by a moneylender who arranges unsecured loans at high-interest rates).

Come to think of it, Mr. Fuji passed away without ever paying me back. I heard that he returned to his hometown in Kumamoto Prefecture to help provide children with an education a few years before he passed away.

As for myself, after quitting my job in October, I began preparing for college entrance examinations, which I planned to take the following year. However, Yobiko (or privately-run preparatory schools) did not accept me. According to them, seeing that it had been seven years since I graduated from high school, and that during those years, although I did go to a photography school, where I learned about filmmaking, the studies I pursued had nothing to do with college entrance examinations and thereby passing one the following year was impossible.

One preparatory school recommended studying at their school throughout the following year with the aim of passing the entrance examination to the college I wanted to go the year following the next. However, I was not willing to wait that long.

My father was angry with me for quitting my job and changing the course of my life toward pursuing a college education. He would not even speak with me. Therefore, I seriously needed to get into a college within a year.

I decided to give up aiming for a public university and narrowed my target to three private universities: Ritsumeikan University,

Kansai University, and Momoyama Gakuin University (or St. Andrew's University).

During the day, I worked at a movie theater in Umeda to earn my tuition. My job was to supervise a high-school filmmaking club and also hand out theater coupons at companies in the local community. At home after work, I would try not to run into my father as much as possible during dinner time, and I would stay in my own room, listening to the radio throughout the night.

I never felt relaxed during those days, thinking, "I cannot afford to fail on the entrance examinations. I must pass them." During those days, my mother was the only person who believed in me and told me, "Toshiaki, you're taking the right path." Even to this day, when I recall those days during which I studied for my entrance examinations, which spanned three months, I remember always seeing my mother knitting something, sitting with her legs under the futon of our kotatsu table.

Every time I saw her at the kotatsu table, I remember feeling that she was cheering for me.

Thanks to my mother, I was able to pass my entrance examinations for all three schools.

I decided to go to Kansai University because its tuitions were the most inexpensive, and because it was located close from home, the commute would not cost as much as going to Ritsumeikan University. While Momoyama Gakuin University was the closet and

accessible by bus, it only had a Faculty of Economics and a Faculty of Industry Sociology. I choose Kansai University because I wanted to pursue an education in history rather than economics.

Just as I expected, I found pursuing a degree in history extremely interesting.

However, history was not the only thing I was crazy about during college. I also found myself extremely interested in a woman who would later become my wife.

Anyway, for me, history was the study of people. For me, it was not the study of those who are known to have led successful lives or become famous; I was rather interested in others who failed to achieve their aspirations or had to give up their dreams, those who were persecuted by the tyrants of their times, and those who could not put their names in history but had a great influence on their surroundings through their attempts to change them. I found it most interesting to reconstruct the stories of such people by gathering information about them from documents, ruins, and lore.

Later, however, I realized that all those who caught my attention—regardless of whether they were successful, rather unsuccessful, samurai, and/or merchants—had one thing in common; they were unable to avoid one thing, which was death.

I came to realize that to study history—unless it was contemporary history—was to study the dead.

Studying the dead was to talk to the dead by visiting places they

The entire series of the Ming dynasty's Buddhist teachings preserved at hozoin temple of Ōbaku-san Manpuku-ji

had been, read documents about them, and listen to what others had already said about them. Although doing so would from time to time inspire me, talking to the dead always felt like a one-way street.

Yet, because I had become so indulged in pursuing the study of history, horrifying incidents would sometimes occur, where the dead I was studying would directly contact me.

Being directly contacted by the dead was similar to such experiences as spirit possession and sleep paralysis and/or seeing the same dream over and over again.

Come to think of it now, I guess I must have been influenced by the dead before I had come to be directly contacted in the preceding ways, but I assume I was too insensitive to realize that was the case.

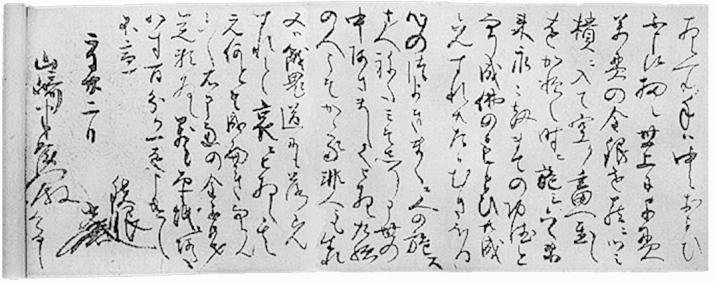
However, meeting the woman who would become my wife and marrying her introduced me to a whole new world.

2. A Zazen meditation meeting at Tetsugenji (or Zuiryuji) temple

I married my wife while we were still in college, and through her, I met Tomekichi Taike, who was then a principal of a public high school in Osaka.

Back then, my wife was interested in finding the answers to such questions as “why she was born” and “is there any absolute truth in this world,” and to find the answers to her questions, she had been attending events held by various religious organizations and meeting with various people without success. Her efforts put into pursuing the answers to her questions, subsequently, led to

Starving people surrounding Tetsugen-ji temple (preserved at Tetsugen-ji temple)



Tragic debt certificate left behind by Tetsugen

meeting the aforementioned principal of a public high school in Osaka, Tomekichi Taike.

(Because Mr. Tomekichi Taike used to be a schoolteacher, people who pursue the study of the heart with him call him “Taike sensei” [lit. Teacher Taike]; therefore, that is how I will hereinafter be referring to him.)

My wife back then would often leave the house on weekends.

This was because on days that schools were off, Taike sensei would get together with a number of people at such places as coffee shops or one of their houses to discuss such topics as “why we were born,” “what the purpose of life is,” and “why we think we are our physical bodies, when instead we are consciousnesses.”

The truths that Taike sensei talked about, the foremost of which comprised the world of consciousness and the flow of consciousness, are extremely significant.

Lately, the world of consciousness and the world after death

have joined other research interests of physicists, including quantum mechanics researchers. However, having listened to Taike sensei talk about the flow of consciousness over the years, to me, it seems that physicists have finally become aware of the existence of something that Taike sensei has been discussing for years now.

However, back in college, immediately after getting married to my wife, I never thought I would be making the preceding statement.

Back then, in order not to become involved with the worlds my wife was actively engaging herself in, I was intentionally trying to indulge myself in the world of Zen.

Normally, the study of history deeply involves the study of religions. According to ancient Japanese history, most kofun tumuli are built near shrines; so much so that there are even academic disciplines titled “shrine archeology” and “Shinto archeology.” In addition to Shinto, religions in Japan include Buddhism and Christianity, both of which came from outside Japan and often cause cultural friction and political issues in the country. Furthermore, as a matter of fact, Judaism and Zoroastrianism also deeply influenced Japanese culture in such aspects of funeral rituals as Japanese graves, spirit tablets, and Dharma names, which funny enough, Japanese people wrongly believe to have come from Buddhism.

In other words, research into the history of humankind cannot be carried out without exploring religions.

In my case, since I was interested in what kind of interaction

took place between Japan and countries overseas between the middle ages and the early modern period, I took interest in cultural friction caused by the introduction of Christianity. I became interested in those who attempted to bring aspects of European culture into Japan under the persecution by the Toyotomi and Tokugawa clans. Around the same time, a historical incident happened—the Ming dynasty was replaced by the Qing dynasty. Consequently, Chinese refugees entered Japan, some of them carrying with them documents of historical significance.

One such refugee was Ingen Ryūki, the founder of Ōbaku-shū—one of several schools of Zen in Japanese Buddhism—and he brought the entire series of the Ming dynasty's Buddhist teachings, comprising 6,956 texts.

One of the Chinese refugees belonging to the Ōbaku-shū school, whom I became interested in, was Tetsugen Dōkō, a Japanese Zen Master.

Tetsugen studied under Ingen and thereby came to Japan with him. Tetsugen wanted to promote Buddhism by distributing prints of the entire series of Buddhist teaching texts that Ingen brought with him and asked Ingen for permission. Ingen granted Tetsugen's request and entrusted all 6,956 texts with him, allowing him to make printing woodblocks.

But making printing woodblocks of 6,956 texts is easier said than done, because the texts comprise 96,000 pages, which required

producing 48,000 woodblocks—a load of work that just imagining performing makes me feel overwhelmed and also required a large amount of funding.

To secure enough funding, Tetsugen decided to collect donations, and to ask as many people for donations as possible, he traveled around the entire nation three times within a decade.

By the way, the glyphs that were invented when producing the printing woodblocks are the characters used as Ming typefaces today, and the size of the printing woodblocks became that of the boxes today comprising Japanese genkō yōshi writing paper.

Tetsugen spent half his life on publishing the Daizokyo Buddhist text, during which years he also traveled around West Japan to save people suffering from famine. To save such people, Tetsugen used the Buddhist scriptures that he just finished printing as mortgage, and with the money he borrowed, Tetsugen cooked rice porridge. At areas with too many people for him to cook enough rice porridge, Tetsugen made paper rolls of rice and handed them out, and when larger numbers of people even made doing that impossible, Tetsugen made paper rolls of money and handed them out until he eventually ran out of money.

More starving people kept lining up in front of the gate of Tetsugen-ji temple each day. The number of starving people seemed endless. The more rice porridge Tetsugen provided them with, the larger the number of starving people grew. Tetsugen

eventually became ill and died, while listening to the starving people grudgingly say, “Porridge. Please I need porridge.”

After Tetsugen died, a letter was discovered, written by him asking for a loan. In his letter, Tetsugen said, “I know if I quit giving out porridge, more people will starve to death. Therefore, if circumstances come to require me to cut off my finger and break off my arm to feed the people and thereby save them from starving to death, I will. That is how determined I am; I am not about to quit. So please lend me more money.” A copy of the actual letter, made by one of Tetsugen’s disciples, remains to this day at Tetsugen-ji temple, located in Naniwa Ward, Osaka City.

One day, I heard that a Zazen meditation session was regularly held at Tetsugen-ji temple twice a week.

Around this time, my wife literally worshipped Taike sensei. For some reason, I wanted to compete with her, and to do so, I decided to worship Tetsugen and entered the gate to Tetsugen-ji temple to participate in its Zazen meditation sessions. Other reasons behind this decision of mine included avoiding being invited by my wife to one of Taike sensei’s meetings, and I also wanted to read Tetsugen’s final letter.

Around this time, my thoughts about Taike sensei, who used to be in the Imperial Japanese Army Academy, were as follows: “I don’t know how much a former student of the Imperial Japanese Army Academy knows about Buddhism, which our predecessors

brought to Japan, refined it, and passed it on to us over many generations. But I highly doubt a principal of public high school would know very much!"

And so one day I visited Tetsugen-ji temple for the first time.

When I arrived at the temple, it was half an hour till six, at which time the Zazen meditation session was scheduled to begin. I remember there being sunlight outside, so it must have been around June.

It was very quiet inside the temple. Not many cars were running down Yotsubashi Street in front of the temple, so instead of ruining the quietness of the temple, the sound of their engines rather brought out the serenity.

The temple was new, so it must have been rebuilt after being destroyed once by the airstrikes during World War II. In addition, it was clean, and the main hall was on the second floor. Inside the entrance were stairs, leading to the second floor. In front of the stairs was a statue, which was of Budai, but I did not know that at the time until I later heard so from the abbot.

"Praying to this monk won't help you. Try hanging onto him; it won't do you any good. At best, it'll make you drown," said the abbot.

These statements also appealed to me. They somehow sounded evil and as if those of a person who achieved enlightenment (For some reason, imbalances, such as the archaic smile and evil-yet-enlightening statements, appeal to me.)

On the other side of the stairs was the entrance to the room on the first floor, which was the venue for the Zazen meditation session.

Immediately after entering the temple, I felt serenity and a coldness enshroud myself. On my side was a shoe cupboard, and in front of me, I saw a board on which was written Kyakkashoko, which translates to “know thyself.”

The atmosphere made me feel like saying, “Alright, bring it on!” but I had the decency to say instead, “Hello, may I come in?” But as if something was sticking on the back of my throat, I could only say this in a small, muffled voice.

As one could probably imagine, the main hall remained silent; no one said, “Sure, come in!”

So once again, I said “May I come in, please?”

But my voice sunk into the silence.

Again, no one responded.

I thought for a second, “I must have got the wrong day. It’s 30 minutes till. So someone must be here by now, if today was the day.”

I was about to turn around and leave.

Then, a well-built old monk appeared.

The monk looked like the Budai statue, wearing a grab.

“May I help you?” he said.

“I read in the newspaper that there would be a Zazen meditation session today,” I replied.

“Yes. But you’re a little early. No one has come yet. Please

come in and wait, if you'd like," he told me and then returned back into the room.

The floor was boarded and well-polished. Possibly because it was still new, the temple gave me the impression of a public hall conference room rather than a temple. On the desks lined up against the wall were pieces of calligraphy, beautifully written in black ink and still being dried. On a desk next to those were stacked up a number of printing woodblocks of Daizokyo; on the wall behind me near the entrance to the temple was a panel painting of Tetsugen standing at the gate of Tetsugen-ji temple, while surrounded by a countless number of starving people.

While I was looking at the panel painting, a nice-looking young man about my age entered. He nodded at me and went straight into the room.

A few seconds later, the old man, along with the young man, came up to me and said, "This boy here is one of participants of the Zazen meditation session and he also serves as the leader." The abbot told the young man to show me how I should sit and inform me of some other things I should note.

According to the leader, Zazen meditation sessions were held twice a week as in the newspaper and the participation fee was 100 yen, which we were expected to pay by putting a 100-yen coin in a can on the table. The participation fee was for buying tea and snacks we would enjoy after the Zazen meditation session. Other than these,

there were no rules that particularly caught my attention. The leader told me anyone was welcomed any time they wanted to come.

The sitting rule required two zabuton cushions. One was to be laid on the floor; the other one was to be folded and put on the bottom edge of the first cushion. Those who came early were to prepare these seats for those who may come.

To sit on these zabuton cushion seats, one was to sit on the one laid on the floor and put the folded one underneath his/her bottom. There were also rules for the positioning of our feat. The heel of one's right foot was to be laid on his/her left thigh; the left heel was to be put on the right thigh. By sitting in such a fashion, the knees and the bottom of the person sitting would work as props like the legs of a tripod, helping him/her sit stably. There was a name to this sitting style—the lotus position. If this position was impossible to keep, anyone was allowed to either sit in a semi-lotus position, using one leg and one's bottom to maintain stability, or he/she could sit in the more standard Japanese style of seiza, although the latter is not ideal for sitting long hours.

After a few minutes, that day's participants began to arrive.

We sat in two rows with plenty of space between each of us.

The first thing we did was chant the Heart Sutra together.

Immediately after the chant was over, the lights were put out and serenity enshrouded the room.

We were told to close our eyes half-way and look a little

beyond the tip of our knees.

The more time passed, the quieter the room became.

After a few minutes, the person sitting at the very right end of my row stood up. He then walked between the two rows very quietly as if he were sliding.

Shortly after, I heard a series of high-pitched slapping sounds.

Participants were being slapped on their back with a flat wooden keisaku stick. The slapping was implemented when participants showed that they were sleepy or showed to be tensed up. With the room being very quiet, hearing those sliding footsteps worked to my disadvantage, making my feel tensed, instead of helping me relax.

The footsteps stopped right behind my back.

The keisaku stick patted me a couple times. I put my hands together and bent forward.

The stick slapped me three times. When the keisaku slapping is being implemented, one should stay as still as possible. This is because if the stick were to come in contact with your ear, it could slice it off.

After slapping my back, the footsteps quietly walked away.

The tension I had been feeling was gone, but it was replaced by a numbness.

This is how what perhaps could be called my practicing of Zen had been initiated.

3. A charitable calligraphy event at Tetsugenji temple

I became increasingly busy in my free time. I had two Zazen meditation sessions to attend every week, and on weekends, I also had a reading session of The Gateless Barrier and a lecture on archeology to attend. In addition, I was working on an article, with which I intended to enter a local history research contest.

My life was centered around these events for quite a while.

In a matter of weeks, I came to really enjoy the Zazen meditation sessions.

In addition, on weekends, because I came to know the abbot better than before, I went to the temple to see him and was allowed to take pictures of Tetsugen's final letter (i.e., a copy made by his disciple), as well as other ancient documents.

Then, one day, after that day's Zazen meditation session, the

Mummy mermaid preserved at Tetsugen-ji temple

abbot asked me to stay a while longer and subsequently disappeared into the back of the room. I wondered what he wanted but waited as asked. A few seconds later, the abbot returned and asked me to come to the desk in one of the corners of the venue. He then pointed at a flat box on the desk and told me to go ahead and open it.

The box was about 1.5 meters long; its width was about 70 centimeters; its height about 10 centimeters. I wondered what was inside, so I opened it as told. Inside was a long scroll of calligraphy that said in large letters, "Shojyoshin" (lit. clean heart), beautifully written in ink.

However, what surprised me even more was that in the bottom right-hand corner, it said, "To Mr. Kiryu" and the scroll was framed decoratively.

I thought, "What should I do. This frame must have been very expensive. I don't have much money with me."

The abbot must have read my mind. He said, "I wrote this as a gift for you, Mr. Kiryu."

"Thank you very much. But at least, let me pay for the frame," I replied.

The abbot said, "There's no need for that. Please, I want you to have it."

I felt relieved and happy. I had no idea why the abbot wanted to give me a gift, but I carried the heavy framed scroll and took the subway home.

I felt a little special. So much so that I did not even mind the heavy frame. I was wondering, “Could other passengers tell that I’m carrying a framed scroll, which was written particularly for me?” I felt like I wanted to show it off to someone. Then, it crossed my mind, “I’ll show it off to my wife as soon as I get home.”

For a while from that day, the framed scroll was given its own place on my wall, and I decided to call my room Kishin-an (The Room of the Awakening of Faith).

The very first lecture that Tetsugen gave as a charity event to collect donations for publishing the Daizokyo Buddhist text, I believe, was the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna. So I took “the Awakening of Faith” from the title of the lecture and gave my room a name, although no one else knew my room had such a name.

Near the end of that year, the publishing company that was holding the local history research contest that I entered gave me a call. I won first prize, which was 200,000 yen. Back then 200,000 yen was a lot a money, so I was extremely happy. I decided to give half to my wife and donate the remaining half, along with some money I made from selling some old books, to Tetsugen-ji temple when it annually accepted charity at the end of the year.

Back then, monks in Osaka and Kyoto gathered at Tetsugen-ji temple to hold an annual charity bokuseki autograph event. I had already planned to help the charity event along with other Tetsugen-ji temple’s Zazen meditation session volunteers. So I

decided to donate my money at the event partly as a thank you for the framed scroll I earlier received as a gift.

Helping hold the charity event was quite fun.

First, we prepared for the event. Tetsugen-ji temple has mysterious treasures—mummies of a mermaid and a dragon, which were imported from China during the Edo period. The authenticity of the mummy mermaid and dragon is endorsed by the fact that they are properly presented in a list of cargo that were carried by a Tang-dynasty ship.

The mummies were imported as medicine for leprosy and other intractable diseases—treasures that only a temple founded by a Chinese refugee monk who came during the Edo period like Ōbaku-shū could possibly have.

The first thing we did was carry down the mummies from the temple's storage room on its third floor.

The upper body of the mummy mermaid looked like that of a monkey; it looked like a mummified monkey with the bottom half of a large fish sowed to it. The mummy dragon did not look like any particular animal I knew but it looked like some unidentifiable object with scales pasted to it.

I felt fine with carrying the dragon; but the mermaid gave me the creeps. They were in glass showcases, but unluckily, when carrying the mermaid, I was assigned the upper half side. I felt like the mummy mermaid was staring at me, with its mouth wide

open and a face very humanlike. The mermaid reminded me of the mummy of Tetsumonkai-shonin.

The two mummies were displayed near the entrance to the temple to attract visitors.

Monks from different temples set up their own charity booths, and signs indicating the name of their temples were posted above their booths. Subsequently, the event began. Calligraphies and paintings sold one after another. Our job as volunteers was to pack each item customers bought and hand them out.

After a few hours, it was breaktime, which was the toughest time for us volunteers.

The event was attended by monks from different schools of Buddhism in the Kansai region, but during the breaktime behind the curtains, none of them seemed like people whom everyone in general would expect teachers or leaders to be like. They spoke about women and how they fooled around with them. The monks would say something along the lines of "This garb really gets in the way when I want to stop by at a bar or a nightclub for a drink."

However, once back to selling items, they put on their mysterious faces again and returned to explaining what their calligraphies meant. Of course I am not the abbot of Tetsugen-ji temple, but still I really questioned the authenticity of those monks.

So that was what a usual day of volunteering at the temple's charity event was like. The first day would quickly pass by and the

booths were closed for the day.

On my way out, I handed the abbot the money I brought to donate, saying, “Please use this money along with today’s sales.” The way I felt at the moment is hard to explain, but I remember feeling a little embarrassed and proud, having second thoughts about giving away the money, and also feeling superior to others. Because of feeling such complex emotions all at once, all I could think of was leaving the money with the abbot and heading home as quick as possible.

After a month or so, the abbot came to me and said, “I thought I should tell you that, after considering your good and pure intentions, I thought I shouldn’t tell anyone by whom that money was donated, so no one knows it was you, Mr. Kiryu,” and he handed me a receipt.

“No one will know I donated my prize money,” I thought to myself.

Then I said to the abbot, “Thank you for your consideration,” but inside I regretted giving him the wrong impression that I would not want to be known as the donor.

I hoped that the fact that I was the donor of that money would come to be known by everyone in some natural way. Immediately after thinking so, then I noticed something like that would only happen in a comic book.

4. A strange and mysterious ancient document

After that day I donated my prize money, I became even closer to the abbot.

It was after my donation that the abbot allowed me to take pictures of Tetsugen's final letter, copied by one of his disciples, and he also let me borrow a number of ancient documents preserved at Hōkō-ji temple (also known as, the Flower temple), located in Sanda City, Hyogo Prefecture, where he also served as abbot.

One day, I visited Hōkō-ji temple as I promised.

I borrowed my father's car and took my wife and children with me. Hōkō-ji temple had one of the most well-known rock gardens in Hyogo Prefecture. On the day that we visited, the temple's weeping Japanese cherry was fully blooming, beautifully coloring the cleanly swept white rock garden. There was an elegant woman, sweeping the rock garden dressed in a kimono; she was the abbot's daughter and in charge of taking care of the temple.

We were invited into the temple and treated with tea.

Soon afterwards, the abbot's daughter brought us a large stack of ancient documents wrapped in a large furoshiki cloth. The documents were not photos or copies but the real thing; nor were there just one or two pieces of documents but a tall stack! The daughter entrusted the documents with me, saying, "Please take your

time with them and bring them back whenever you're finished."

My self-assigned job was to organize these ancient documents, produce catalogs, decode at least what the primary documents said, and add some symbols to sentences to help other people who may be interested in them read them. The abbot's daughter told me that no one has so far been able to decode them. So I considered doing the preceding to be one of my major free-time tasks.

The first thing I did was produce catalogs. I began from writing down who wrote them to whom. After producing catalogs, I took pictures of them. Then, I opened the ancient documents and wrote down on a piece of paper just those sentences that were readable. Doing so produced a copy of the original with empty slots indicating which sentences needed to be decoded. Next, I took pictures of the unreadable sentences to carry with me everywhere I would go, so that I could spend my time on trying to decode them wherever I was and whenever I had the time. This method proved to be effective, helping me crack the codes like magic.

Decoding the sentences was a process of repeatedly cracking codes.

My wife, by this time, had already met Taike sensei.

While I tried to decode the ancient documents, my wife kept telling me about how there exists a world after death or how we are not our physical bodies but consciousnesses.

I was completely against the concepts my wife told me about because this was not the first time she had been into such ideas. She

used to be a member of such religious organizations as The Practical Ethics Association, the Chushinkai, and GLA. So I thought she would become tired of whatever ideas Taike sensei was telling her about. In addition, I was not happy with the fact that she would leave the house the entire day on Sundays. One time, when I was already unhappy with her not being home, she told me that there was going to be a one-night-two-day study session, which made me burst of anger.

Days like these passed one after another until one day an incident happened.

That day, I came home from work, had dinner, and then began trying to decode the ancient documents like any other day. I remember the document that I read that day as being written in the late Edo period.

The writer was the then abbot of Hōkō-ji temple. The document was a letter addressed to Ōbaku-san Manpuku-ji, the head temple of the school that Hōkō-ji temple belonged to. The letter was about the abbot himself being ill, feeling lonely because there was no one to visit the temple other than villagers volunteering to look after him while sick, and requesting somebody be sent to his temple to replace him. I remember thinking the letter to be a particularly sad one.

I do not remember how long I had been spending on trying to decode the letter.

But I do remember feeling sleepy and deciding to lie my upper body on my desk to take a short nap. However, something terrible

must have happened to me while I took a nap.

When I woke up, my wife and children seemed scared of me.

My children seemed like they were about to cry any second. Then, my wife, seeming terrified of me, asked me, “Are you alright?”

I had no idea why she said that.

According to her, I suddenly began crying out things that made no sense as if I went insane and my eyes did not look like my own. She said I looked as if I was obsessed by something. Right before I returned normal, my wife was about to call the paramedics because even my own children began to fear me.

First, I thought my family was trying to play a trick on me.

And I cannot be blamed for that, because I did not remember crying out madly as if I had gone insane. I only remembered feeling sleepy and lying forward for a short nap.

But my children still seemed terrified of me, so I realized this was not a joke.

Immediately after coming to this realization, I looked at the ancient document I was decoding, thinking, “It can’t be because of this, or could it?”

But there was no other way of explaining what just happened.

Could it be that while reading the ancient document, the abbot’s ghost obsessed me? Could it be that the feelings that the abbot was experiencing at the moment he was writing the letter directly contacted me?

5. Learning about the study of the heart

During the two to three years while I frequented the Tetsugen-ji temple, many strange things happened to me.

Each of the first couple years, I broke a foot. First, it was my left foot; then, the right. I broke my left foot when my wife forced me to attend a session held by The Practical Ethics Association. I was trying to stand up after sitting in the seiza position; I broke my instep bone.

The following year, I broke my right instep bone while riding my bicycle; the pedal broke off. This happened one week before I had been planning to participate in an all-night Zen session. The incident I mentioned at the end of the preceding chapter happened almost immediately after my right food had healed.

In between these incidents, I would see those dreams mentioned earlier, where I would end up meeting with the Buddhist mummy of Tetsumonkai.

On the other hand, my wife, having already met Taike sensei by this time, would be learning about how to reflect on her heart. However, a few years after she met Taike sensei, she came to me and said, “I opened a spiritual path,” which sounded crazy to me.

She told me that thoughts come resonating from inside her heart.

Despite me not wanting to have anything to do with Taike sensei, my own thoughts, saying, “Please open your heart,” came resonating to myself through my wife, channeling for me. Such experiences repeatedly recurred, and the feeling I experienced at such times was like someone other than my wife was speaking to me through her.

I was completely at a loss of what was going on. So I went to the abbot of Tetsugen-ji temple for advice. I read books by such writers as Shirley MacLaine and Shinji Takahashi in an attempt to make sense of what was going on. But none of these efforts were of any help.

Recalling those days, now I do believe that the thoughts that resonated through my wife were my own thoughts trying to reach myself. It was me myself trying to tell myself to realize the truth—i.e., that you are not your physical body but a consciousness. We all express our own thoughts even without saying them. These thoughts include what we are actually thinking at the moment, but they are not limited to such types—others, more importantly, are our real thoughts that we ourselves are unaware of, resonating from our heart.

My true thoughts were sending me distress signals, trying to tell me that I am suffering. I now know that I was crying out to myself, “Please realize the truth!” I also now know that the mysterious worrisome feeling that enshrouded me that night when

I was working as a member of a film production crew was myself trying to tell me the same thing.

Back then, when my wife was channeling my thoughts to me, I had no idea what was going on but simply thought, “That’s one possibility.” However, there was still something holding me back from accepting that was not just one possibility but the truth. So, I decided to meet Taike sensei in person.

Some days later, I was finally standing on the railway platform of Kintetsu Kishi Station to meet Taike sensei.

However, I still needed some time before I could make up my mind; instead of directly going to Taike sensei’s house, I stopped by at Prince Shōtoku’s mausoleum first, and once I arrived at the mausoleum, I realized there was nothing to do there. Therefore, I composed a waka haiku poem, based on Prince Shotoku's theory that “harmony is precious”:

Achieving harmony is easier said and written than done.

I wrote that poem in my notebook for no particular reason I could think of even now.

Subsequently, I thought, “Well, thanks to Mr. Taike, I got to see Prince Shōtoku’s mausoleum, and now I think I’ll be heading home. It’s not nice to visit a person’s home without first making an appointment, so I should come back another day.”

So I returned to Kishi Station, but for some reason, instead of returning home, I took a bus to Taike sensei's place, which was in Taiho Town.

Despite my sudden visit, Taike sensei said, "Well, you came from the north tip of Osaka to its south tip. There must be something you want to tell me. Come on in."

Initially, I came to make some complaints. Consequently, just like the saying, "Many go out for wool and come home shorn," I was completely convinced that the flow of consciousness exists.

I do not mean to say that Taike sensei explained to me what he means by the flow of consciousness. All he did was listen to what I had to say and nod a few times as necessary. I was the one doing the talking. So if I were to be asked by someone, "What was it about Mr. Taike's story that day that inspired you?" I would have to say there was nothing in particular other than the fact that I was crying just because of the fact I met him. The experience was truly unexplainable in any other way.

It has been more than 30 years since the day I first met Taike sensei.

In pursuing Taike sensei's study, there were many things I tried to rid of from my heart.

One of them was my experience of participating in the Zazen meditation sessions at Tetsugen-ji temple. My heart pursued

enlightenment as if it was a physical obtainable object. I also tried to become enlightened so that I could use being enlightened to my advantage. My desire to become enlightened was a darkness that had been living inside my heart for long. Another darkness of mine was the desire to acquire knowledge. In my case, money and reputation was not what I pursued; it was knowledge.

One night shortly after I first met Taike sensei, when I was in bed, trying to go to sleep, I felt a ghost monk suddenly lie on top of me. I was so scared that I could not move.

I only felt the ghost; I did not see it or hear any sound from it. But it gave me difficulty breathing. Subsequently, there were nights when I would wake up after midnight and feel the ghost monk lie on top of me and scare me unmovable. Some nights I could not sleep at all because of the fear. Some days later, I came to think it must have been the ghost of Kohen-ajyari.

Back then, I was gathering information on Kohen-ajyari, who used to be a student monk of the Tiantai school of Buddhism and also a historian, so I thought I was obsessed by him. In the late 12th century, after entering mappō (or the Latter Day of the Dharma) and becoming devastated by the belief that self-salvation had become impossible, Kohen decided to wait for Maitreya-nātha, said to reborn into the world 5.67 billion years from his death, to come to his rescue and, thinking that he could not be saved if he maintained his physical form of a human, he committed suicide

by drowning himself in Sakuraga-ike lake, believing that doing so would turn him into a snake.

On the day that I first met Taike sensei, Taike sensei introduced me to a channeler, who said that my thoughts were telling me that I believe I am obsessed by a monk who thinks he is a snake. I immediately thought that the channeler was referring to Kohen.

Days later, I was scared that the ghost monk would haunt me again one night and phoned Taike sensei for his advice. Because this phone call was of the type that one would not want to make from his/her workplace, I went outside to make the call from a pay phone. So as I spoke to Taike sensei, I had to keep inserting more coins, but the following was the advice I got: “What is it about the ghost monk that scares you? Don’t you think it’s cold to want everything that scares you to go away? That’s the same thing as purification rituals. Don’t try to shoo things that scare you; instead, accept them. Accept them like they do in Yoshimoto Shinkigeki comedy shows, where they say, ‘Hello! Come on in!’ ” After I received this advice, I remember the fear I felt toward the ghost monk dissolve and disappear; the fear has not reappeared ever since then.

The ghost monk was not an eternal entity that obsessed me, it was an internal part of me—my heart.

The incident that scared my entire family, where I thought the

former abbot of Hōkō-ji temple (located in Sanda City) obsessed me, was also my own heart trying to let me know that I was suffering.

Both incidents, including my dreams, were all messages from my own heart.

Before I learned this from Taike sensei and accepted it as truly being what was going on with me, I had undergone a series of diseases as if I were a museum of sicknesses, including Ménière's disease—where the suffer feels as if his/her surroundings were spinning—fractures of both feet—when I do not even have osteoporosis—and a then-mysterious loss of my voice, immobilization, and severe headaches.

However, once I met Taike sensei and learned from him and accepted that all my fears were self-created by my heart, incidents, including injuries, began to stop occurring. What surprised me the most was that even my headaches, which I had since I was a child and thought would persist until the day I died, also ceased. Now I do not even remember how my headaches felt like.

That said, even today, despite the fact that I am over 70 years old, I still do not know what underlies my deepest fear.

My father passed away as has my mother. I myself am now 71 years old, and death has become much more closer than it had when I was younger.

What I recently imagine is that my deepest fear might have its

roots in my world after death.

Be it Mount Asama, Mount Yudono, Kyoto, or Tetsugen-ji temple in Naniwa, Osaka, whenever I was in a location that made me think about death, something inside me made me want to do some research. Until I met Taike sensei, I had thought that I was just a history nerd or had a stronger curiosity compared to others, but now I know that I was just being urged by my fear of death.

Even though now I knew that we are consciousnesses that exist for eternity, instead of our physical bodies—and even though with that knowledge, I was trying to deal with my fear of death—there was still something about death that I continued to fear. I wondered what it could be.

I kept trying to figure out what it could be, then I suddenly thought that if there is such a thing as a clue to my question, it must exist in The Flow of Consciousness, a textbook for the study of the heart, taught by Taike sensei.

The Flow of Consciousness was written by a channeler named Kayo Shiokawa on behalf of Taike sensei, who said he wanted those pursuing the study of the heart with him to consider the book as his last will. The book was written so that Taike sensei's fellow practitioners would have something to turn to whenever they may come to need some guidance.

In addition, another thing that crossed my mind as containing the possibility of holding some clues to my question was

opportunities to meditate on the theme of the condition of one's own heart after his/her death, which are being provided via the Internet by Ms. Kayo Shiokawa, whom Taike sensei chose to pass on the baton to before he passed away (in other words, I am saying that my own heart must know the answer to my question).

In the following chapter, I would like us to begin our journey on solving the mystery of what the world after death is by using as a foothold what I have been talking about up until this point.

Column:Ms. O's experience

When I was in elementary school, I often had an extremely painful and scary experience whenever I went to bed while tired or struggling with a cold or other illness. I would become immobilized as if my body turned into stone. If I tired to call for help, I would be struck by some kind of pain, like an electrical shock, and become even more stiffly immobilized.

One day, I became too scared of such experiences that sleeping itself had become a terrifying event, so I tried as hard as I could to stay awake. My mother noticed something was different about me, and she asked and had our family doctor come to see me. However, our doctor only said, "There's nothing wrong with your daughter. I think she experienced sleep paralysis. Your daughter is at an age where children are most sensitive in their childhood. Experiencing sleep paralysis is quite a common thing among children around her age."

Whenever Taike sensei described the world after death, I was screaming inside myself, "I remember that world!"

Because I am rather sensitive than others, I often had déjà vu, and to me, reincarnation was always a

realistic thing.

Because I have always believed we do reborn, die again, and then are born again, I know there is a world after death. But as far as I know, the world after death is an indescribably horrifying place.

Just when I thought I figured out what the world after death actually is, now another question has come to mind — i.e., how are we supposed to save ourselves from seeing the world after death as such a horrifying place?

Taike sensei has recently begun to teach us how we can turn our hearts toward ourselves in the dimension of death. We are now practicing meditating with the aim of finding out the state of our own hearts in the dimension of death.

(Mie Prefecture)

Chapter 2

Is suffering infectious?

1. Can one learn of his / her state after death while still alive?

I had an traffic accident the other day, after I had begun writing this book.

I was riding my bicycle across Yamatotakada City, Nara. I came across an intersection. The streets were not very big, there were no traffic signals, very many pedestrians, other bicycles, or vehicles. But I ran into a car that came out of nowhere; a small one, but nonetheless a car. It hit me and my bicycle and we bounced off it. Luckily, the car had just begun to drive forward, so it was not running at a high speed and both the car and I were alright.

I got a few scratches on my hands, but I did not break any bone or hit my head. The car hit me in the right side of my stomach and left a bruise, but this also does not seem to be a serious injury. We called the police and asked them to report the accident as one involving property damage instead of personal injury.

However, after a couple days, the right side of my stomach began to swell and hurt, so I went to see an orthopedic physician in my neighborhood. According to the doctor, there was nothing wrong with my abdominal muscles or intestines. However, there was quite a large amount of water in my abdominal cavity, so we decided to extract the water with a needle. The amount of body fluid containing

blood that the doctor consequently extracted totaled about 10 glass containers a little larger than test tubes.

The doctor said, “That was a lot of fluid you had inside yourself. There’s still about 50 cc left but this remaining fluid is mostly blood that has already begun to solidify, so it can’t be extracted with a needle. However, I wouldn’t recommend extracting it with an incision. It will take some time, but I recommend waiting for it to be absorbed naturally.”

The doctor prescribed a medical supporter to brace my stomach.

I thought now I would feel alright, but by this time my stomach had begun to hurt. Crouching down caused great pain because it required using my abdominal muscles. There was less pain during the day, because I could be careful not to do anything that I knew would cause pain. However, avoiding painful movements was harder while sleeping at night. Particularly around midnight or dawn, I would wake up with pain from turning over unintentionally.

However, paying too much attention not to turn over while sleeping would rob me of sleep and caused me to feel worrisome.

I would think, “Maybe I’m about to die.”

I know it sounds stupid, and I myself would laugh at that thought during the daytime. However, come nightfall and around dawn, my worrisome feeling would grow larger in the dark, and it would feel as if death was close enough that I could reach out and

touch it.

I tried to see this situation as positively as possible and began to consider dawn as being the best time for me to think about death. However, while thinking about death, I felt myself sinking into an unendurable oppressiveness I never felt before and I would feel as if I were being told that I was about to run out of time. I do not mean I was suffering with depression or was mentally unstable. It was not like that; besides, other than the pain I felt in my stomach, I was physically quite healthy.

Once the day started and I went to work, my worries would go away as I carried out my daily job or interacted with others. However, come dawn, along with the pain would also return my worries.

Over the past few days, it has been like that.

Ms. Kayo Shiokawa, who I spoke a little about at the end of the preceding chapter, provides us with opportunities via the Internet to meditate on the mysterious theme of turning our hearts toward ourselves in the dimension of death.

The reason I used the word “mysterious” just now is that meditation is usually practiced with the aim of feeling fulfilled or relaxed by enjoying the feeling of being alive in the physical world. However, the aim of turning our hearts toward ourselves in the dimension of death through meditation is to find out how much we suffer in that dimension.

I suppose you might be wondering, “But why do you know we suffer in the dimension of death?”

To answer that question, allow me to tell you what I learned from Taike sensei and came to believe.

As Taike sensei says, “We are all consciousnesses.” The word “consciousness” in this sense refers to all such thoughts and feelings we feel with our heart and, more importantly, feelings that we ourselves do not even consciously know we have. Of course, there is no clear-cut boarder line between thoughts/feelings we are aware of experiencing with our hearts and those that we are unaware of having, just as there is no clear-cut boarder line between what we can refer to as our heart and our consciousness; there is no clear definition of those terms either.

The bottom line is that we are all consciousnesses instead of our physical bodies, which is merely a container of ourselves.

As you are aware, our bodies are built to sense information existing outside our bodies.

Our eyes see, ears hear, mouth tastes, nose smells, and hands touch things, providing us with information about the world outside ourselves.

Despite being consciousnesses, once we are given a body, we come to believe in our senses that allow us to feel things more than we do in ourselves, thereby believing we are our physical bodies. Therefore, we come to think that, to become happy, we need to be

superior to others in terms of our health and be wealthier and smarter than others.

I assume I sound like I am stating the obvious.

We compete and fight with others, in order to maintain and lead our lives more comfortably. Therefore, our desire for having more money, becoming famous, controlling others, and showing off all stem from the belief that we are our physical bodies, which is why we come to suffer.

We all try to be and tell ourselves that we are a good person, wife, husband, employee, and employer. We then begin to fool others that we actually are with the words that we use and attitudes we display. We then even come to fool ourselves that we are good people, twisting our hearts to obey our false selves and telling ourselves we are not wrong.

We may be able to fool others and even ourselves on the surface, but what about deep in our hearts?

While we are alive with physical bodies, being busy with such matters as work at home and at an office, studies at school, and other activities, the suffering that our hearts go through may not appear on the surface. The suffering of our hearts do try to appear on the surface, yet most of us push it back down and keep a lid on it, fooling ourselves.

However, once we die and no longer have a body, circumstances come to be turned around.

The condition of our hearts become more noticeable.

The world after death is the entrance to the world of consciousness. Do not get me wrong; we do live in the world of consciousness also while alive—it is just that we easily mistake the physical world for the real world while alive. However, once we die, with the absence of the physical world, it becomes easier for us to tell that the world of consciousness is the real world. If one knew with his/her heart that the world of consciousness is the real world, to him/her, death would mean being freed from his/her physical body and being allowed to return to the real world of consciousness. However, because we came to have our physical bodies, we came to plant seeds of pain inside our hearts. The suffering of our hearts are shoved down to the depths of our hearts while we are alive; however, once we die the suffering surfaces.

Unless one reflects on his/her heart at a daily basis, he/she would not even notice that his/her heart is full of such suffering thoughts as envying, despising, and cursing others and/or his/her own circumstances, and blaming others out of the belief that he/she is right and others are wrong.

Once we die, our true thoughts and feelings will burst out and swallow ourselves. These thoughts and feeling are not only those that we had this lifetime but also others that we had during past lifetimes. If there is such a thing as hell, it represents the condition of your own heart. Hell is not a place we go after we die. Instead, we are

already in hell; we just feel as if we go to hell after death because our physical bodies, which protect us while alive, disappear after death.

Applying what I learned from Taike sensei and subsequently came to believe in, it seems that my fear of death stems from my memories of suffering over countless experiences of reincarnations.

This line of thought explains why I have been trying to run away from an unknown worrisome feeling and convinces me that the feeling was one of fear—particularly that of death.

The worrisome feeling I felt as a child and also after I grew up and began to work as a member of a film production crew was exactly the same feeling I felt while meditating with the aim of turning my heart toward myself in the dimension of death, so I was completely convinced the fear of death was what I was trying to run away from.

Immediately after realizing this, I felt as if something that had been stuck in my chest dissolved.

On another note, the feeling of suffering is an energy. Therefore, although I hate to have to admit this, the current condition of my heart is one that radiates the energy of suffering to all over the universe. Not that we need to refer to the law of the conservation of energy as proof, but as is evident from the law, the energy of suffering will not just resolve on its own.

According to what I learned from Taike sensei and came to believe in, we can convert negative energies to positive ones by

realizing and accepting that we are suffering and accepting that as a fact. However, converting our energies is not something that others can do for us; we must convert them ourselves.

Our own sufferings can only be healed by ourselves. Asking others, gurus, and/or god(s) for salvation is meaningless. Only we can convert our own sufferings.

That is why we reincarnate; we reincarnate to take another try at converting our negative energies to positives ones. However, every time we are born into the world, we come to believe our physical bodies are ourselves, and instead of reducing our suffering, we accumulate more.

To save oneself from this chain of suffering, we first need to realize that we are suffering. As I mentioned above, we depend on our senses in evaluating ourselves. We evaluate how we are doing, based on comparisons with others in terms of wealth, our children's school grades, physical appearances, and decisions of who is right/wrong. In other words, our criteria of how we are doing is based on the world outside ourselves.

Whether others admire or despise us, nothing about us changes. In other words, how we are doing needs to be evaluated based on criteria relating to the world inside us.

Taike sensei says, "We all need to stop looking at the world outside us. Our bodies are built to search outside ourselves for criteria for evaluating ourselves, so we need to consciously search

inside us for such criteria."

Now, you may be wondering, "What does Mr. Taike mean by searching inside ourselves for criteria for evaluating how we are doing?"

Meditating under a waterfall, chanting the Nianfo, or meditating in the lotus position will only result in the person practicing such teachings to become narcissistic, thinking, "Not anyone can try this hard," eventually leading him/her to fooling himself/herself.

Reading the preceding statement might make you think, "Then, what am I supposed to do to search inside myself?"

2. Reflection on one's mother

What Taike sensei means by "searching inside ourselves for criteria for evaluating how we are doing" is simple. He says that we first need to reflect on our own mother.

I imagine some readers might be thinking, "What? That's all we need to do?"

When Taike sensei was a child, he once thought, "Who am I?" and "Why was I born and why do we all die?"

These questions became increasingly significant to Taike sensei after he entered the Imperial Japanese Army Air Academy and began to receive education as a member of the Japanese Special Attack Units.

However, the war was over before Taike sensei had the opportunity to carry out a suicide attack as a member of one of the Special Attack Units. Subsequently, he returned to studying at a regular school and then began teaching mathematics, without being able to find the answer to his questions.

Being a mathematics teacher, Taike sensei always ensured that there was a clear-cut answer to the questions he asked his students and also provided clues. Therefore, he thought there must be someone providing him clues to his questions.

Subsequently, he arrived at the conclusion that his mother

must be providing him with the clues he needs.

Therefore, Taike sensei began writing down the following: 1) Things his mother had done for him, 2) Things his mother had not done for him, and 3) Things he had done for his mother. In writing everything that came to mind regarding the preceding items, Taike sensei also wrote down the feelings he remembered having while experiencing the events that he recalled, and he tried to remember as far back as he could—including childhood and beyond.

As Taike sensei remembered as far back as was possible, he came to the answer to his questions, which was that what he was recalling was not things his mother did for him, things his mother did not do for him, or things he did for his mother. All events that he had been recalling, as well as feelings that he had been remembering along, were all something he had felt with his heart.

The person toward whom your heartfelt feelings surface is the person who gave you life—your biological mother. Your heartfelt feelings surface toward your mother because she is the person who gave you life. What are your current feelings toward your own biological mother? Try calling your mother in your heart; what kind of feelings do you feel in your heart? Please describe those feelings in a notebook for your own study—this is the first step in the study of the heart, taught by Taike sensei. In describing your feelings toward your mother, the important thing is to not try to write things

Taike sensei talking about the importance of reflecting on one's heart (before retirement from serving as a public high school principal in Osaka)

you know are false and not try to describe your feelings purer than they are.

Throughout your entire life, from the time you were born, was brought up, became a working member of society, and/or became a mother or father, and then came or will come to regard your mother as an elderly, the feelings that you experience toward your mother—be them anger, envying, cursing, fear, loneliness, and/or regret—they are able to surface because they are felt toward the person who gave you birth.

What looking into your heart means is to realize that you do feel various feelings deep down. The phrase “Reflection on one’s mother” may sound like a theme for an elementary school student’s assignment. However, as I just explained above, the aim in reflecting on one’s mother is not describing the type of person your mother is/was. Rather, the aim is to recall as many events as possible from your childhood and remember the feelings that you experienced toward your mother during each event.

Reflecting on one’s mother is a not a fancy difficult practice; however, it shows us what kind of feelings our hearts experienced. Reflecting on our own mother shows us that we are not necessarily the kind of person we believed we are. For instance, someone who thought he/she was a good person may realize that was not so, while on the other hand, someone who viewed himself/herself as a bad person may realize he/she may not have been such a bad person after all.

If one reaches this point of knowing the types of feelings one’s heart experienced, he/she is advancing on the right track; however, note that it may take writing in many, many notebooks. Nonetheless, do not give up; try hard to remember the feelings that you experienced toward your mother.

In addition, another practice that I learned from Taike sensei—and I came to believe in—and want to next introduce readers to is reflecting on one’s mistake of asking others for salvation.

3. Reflection on one's mistake of asking others for salvation

To some readers, the phrase "asking others for salvation" may sound very religious.

Many readers might think, "But I've never practiced any religion!"

But we ask doctors for help and rely on medicine when we become ill—particularly when we catch an intractable disease. How is that different from asking others for salvation? Just because one does not rely on a shaman or a fortune teller when making decisions, that does not necessarily mean he/she does not ask others for salvation.

Do not get me wrong; Taike sensei does not mean that relying on doctors and medicine is wrong. What he is saying is when asking doctors for help and using medicine, are you not mistaking the purpose of doing so as to simply fix your problem?

We need to consider why we become ill and/or why unhappy events occur. Taking the time to reflect on such questions will help us realize what mistakes our hearts made. If one were not to reflect on why one became ill and/or why an unhappy event occurred and just be satisfied once he/she overcomes his/her illness or unhappy event, that would be pathetic. Being satisfied once one's illness and/or unhappy event is in the past shows that one believes that the

physical world is the real world. Practically all instances of going to the doctor and relying on medicine without considering why the illness and/or unhappy event occurred could be considered the same as asking others for salvation.

There are many consciousnesses inside your heart asking you to listen to what they have to say and asking you to help them save themselves. Those consciousnesses surface as illnesses and unhappy events. If you did not know why you were born, what the purpose of life is, and who you are, when such illnesses and/or unhappy events occur, you will naturally search outside yourself for cures. Of course, when we become ill, we should ask doctors for help and use medicine. In addition, when unhappy events occur, we should do whatever we need to do to make us feel better. However, the ultimate aim in dealing with illnesses and unhappy events should not be just to heal ourselves. Illnesses and unhappy events exist to help us reflect on the feelings that our hearts experienced so that we can realize the mistakes our hearts made and subsequently accept ourselves as having made them.

The aim in reflecting on the feelings our hearts experienced is not in overcoming or preventing illnesses and/or unhappy events from occurring; the aim is to simply reflect on such feelings. We give ourselves illnesses and unhappy events as an opportunity to practice reflection. Everything that happens to us throughout life

are scenarios that we wrote for ourselves. We provide ourselves with challenging experiences. But as long as one keeps leading his/her life with the belief that his/her body is himself/herself, seeing his/her life as based on a scenario prepared by himself/herself would be impossible. In such a state, one would always be looking for solutions to problems causing himself/herself sufferings at hand. However, the true solution to such sufferings is to reflect on the feelings that one's heart has experienced.

In other words, unless one reflects on the feelings that his/her heart has experienced, problems causing sufferings cannot be resolved fundamentally; however, the difficult thing is to truly realize this with one's heart.

We are born, we live, and we die—many things happen along the road. In my case, the biggest incident was running away from Mount Asama that day. I still have regrets about that day even today, although I am over 70 years old now. In addition, other incidents include the headaches I used to have and the days I spent thinking, "My life would have been much brighter if I didn't have these headaches." But thanks to these incidents, I was led toward the decision to reflect on the feelings that my heart experienced—this is unarguably true. The Flow of Consciousness says that everything that happened to me was based on a scenario I prepared for myself. I know this is hard to believe. But once we think of our

Taike sensei devoting himself to talking about the world of consciousness (after retirement from serving as a school principal)

lives as based on self-prepared scenarios, even under the toughest conditions, such as uncurable diseases, we would know what is best for us.

We would know to think, "There must be something I need to realize through this experience."

Taike sensei says, "Unless we know illnesses and unhappy events exist to help us reflect on the feelings our hearts experienced, every time we encounter an illness, incident, or unhappy event, we will only be able to think, 'I have to do something about this. I hope this tragedy goes away,' and once the burden becomes too heavy to carry alone, we begin to depend on others and religions, and eventually, we begin to envy and curse others, and we may even commit suicide."

Do you now understand the following statement: Everything that happens to you, including events seemingly negative based on the belief that your physical body is you, are actually positive events?

Negative energies are yourself suffering due to not knowing the truth. If you are ill or are undergoing an unhappy event,

consider it as a negative energy inside you that was able to surface as such a phenomenon to speak to you. Negative energies will try to speak to you, and to do so, they will try to contact you through others and/or through events that happen to you.

You might come to be at a loss of how to deal with such negative energies when they come about. As long as you keep focusing on the surface—the person or event through which the negative energy is trying to contact you—you will only be able to focus on fixing the problem—that will most likely be the case, if you consider your true self to be your physical body.

But if you encounter such instances, please remember to take some time on reflecting on the feelings your heart is experiencing and turn your thoughts to the phenomenon at hand. In other words, rather than focusing on the surface of the phenomenon, deal with it as an energy conveying a vibration. Spend some time every day on reflecting on your heart, then you will be able to realize what illnesses/unhappy events are trying to tell you. The events may seem like a tragedy, but the vibrations that their energies convey are pure warmth.

If you come to be able to realize that negative energies are in fact pure warmth, then you will become able to convert them into positive energies. In other words, negative events are opportunities to see the world in a different way.

You will come to see the world in a completely new way.

If you become able to understand that what you used to consider a negative event was in fact a positive one, then you will gradually become able to realize with your heart that everything that has ever happened to you were all essential.

In addition, the two practices of "reflecting on one's mother" and "reflecting on one's mistake of asking others for salvation" both fundamentally teach us the same thing.

The pillars supporting the study of the heart are "reflection on one's mother" and "reflection on one's mistake of asking others for salvation." Our feelings that surface when asking others, including god(s), for salvation and asking to be given some special power are the same heartfelt feelings that surface toward our mother. You will come to understand that this is true, if you continue to practice the two forms of reflection. The feelings that surface toward our mother and those that surface toward others, including god(s), when we ask them for salvation are fundamentally the same.

In addition, no qualities regarding your mother and/or the circumstances under which you were born matter. You chose your own mother and decided the circumstances under which you would be born. You wrote your own scenario with the aim of realizing the truth, or in other words, finding out that the real world was not the physical world but the world of consciousness. No matter how

severe the situation in which you are in right now may be, you are the one who chose to put yourself in that situation. So there is no sense in envying or cursing others and comparing yourself with others. Your true self has always been trying to free you from competing with others, envying, and cursing others; however, your true self had not known how it could help you do so.

Please seriously reflect on your heart. Listen to the voice and screams of your heart. In addition, in doing so, I hope you realize with your heart that your true self is not suffering but is instead happy and that you yourself did in fact write your own scenario yourself.

4. Reincarnation of lifetimes

What do you think right now as you have read this far?

Can you believe that you are not just yourself living your current lifetime but that you have existed many lifetimes in the past and have been allowing your suffering to grow?

Past lifetimes do exist. However, when turning our thoughts toward our past lifetimes, the important thing is not when we existed, in which country we lived, or who we were. The important thing is to turn our thoughts toward the feelings of suffering that our hearts had experienced. Considering that you have read this far, I assume you may be thinking, "Could it be that I am experiencing the same feeling of suffering now as I did in my past lifetimes?"

If you have begun to practice "reflection on your mother" and "reflection on your mistake of asking others for salvation." I assume you have begun to be able to switch from searching outside your heart to searching inside your heart for causes of such superficially negative events as illnesses and came to be able to feel yourself suffering inside.

By the time you come to reach this state, you will no longer be seeing yourself as always right and strong; instead, with the realization that you are suffering inside, you may also find yourself feeling lonely and weeping and screaming. The Flow of

Consciousness teaches us that when we reach that state, instead of feeling depressed or worrying that we may be going down the wrong path, we need to accept that we are suffering and feeling lonely inside because that is how we can covert our negative energies to positive ones.

Now, realizing that we are suffering inside is the first level of this study.

The second level is, as I just mentioned, converting that negative energy into a positive one, and we need to know how to do that.

The most important thing in finding your way through the second level is knowing your mother's warmth.

Through reflecting on your mother and meditating, you will come to understand the unconditional love, or warmth, that your mother had accepted you with. Then, once you understand that warmth, that is what you need to accept yourself with.

Actually doing this is not as easy as it may sound. However, once you come to know your mother's warmth and how to accept yourself with it, because negative feelings that your heart felt are pursuing that warm, they will keep surfacing and appealing to you. When you reach this state, you will come to accept the fact that you are not your physical body but a consciousness, because you will be feeling with your heart your negative energy, which will seem almost unlimited.

Taike sensei says, “The stronger you establish your true self, the smaller your negative energy will become.”

He says, “Your negative energy will not disappear, but it will become small enough that you will no longer be controlled by it nor radiate it on others, because through turning your heart toward your mother through meditation, you will come to feel that you can trust in your true self and also come to be able to tell the difference between false and true hearts.”

Have you realized that you are suffering and are lonely; do you feel your mother’s warmth with our heart?

If you have become able to feel your mother’s warmth through practicing reflection and meditation following the proper steps described in this book, then please embrace your suffering and feeling of loneliness with that warmth.

A feeling of suffering may lead to another one almost endlessly like a domino effect.

Taike sensei says, “I hope everyone will keep asking themselves throughout their daily lives the simple questions of why they were born and why they die.”

Column: Ms. O's experience

When I was three years old, I was weak and often had fevers. One day, I was in bed with an ice pillow under my head and a cold towel on my forehead. I felt terrible, like throwing up, and could not breathe. I felt like I could not take it anymore. My mother was tired from treating me and was lying next to me asleep. I could barely speak but summoned up my strength and said, "Mommy, help." But my mother could not hear me. She would usually notice whenever I said something, even in the smallest of voices, so I thought something was wrong.

Next thing I knew, unlike a while ago when I could not move and was suffering, now I could move around and speak in a loud voice. I said to my mother, "Mom, I got up!" and I shook her, trying to wake her up. But there was no response. Next, I went to my father and did the same. But again, there was no response. I could not hear my own voice. Then, I noticed. I was lying there next to my mother. I was seeing myself from above. My mother and father were underneath me. I floated there in midair, watching them. After a while, I tried to return back into my body, but I could not. I felt some mysterious air that I could tell was not normal. The air flowed, carrying

me away. I tried to break out of the air flow but could only struggle. My surrounding became dark, and in the dark, I was flowing away along with my worries. It was a very strange feeling. I wanted to return. I saw myself become smaller a distance away. I tried as hard as I could to return. Then, I felt something like a blow of air and heard some distance away the chirping of a bird. It was morning. I felt something warm. My body was cold, but my mother was rubbing me, saying, “Don’t worry. You’re okay. You’re okay.” I was so happy and started crying. I remember the warmth of my mother’s hands and of my own tears. Thank you very much for this opportunity.

(Kyoto Prefecture)

Chapter 3

A Letter to Professor Hameroff

1. Where lost spirits go

Now, let's change the subject a little and talk about how the mystery of the world after death is being approached from the perspective of modern science.

Recently, I watched an NHK television program titled "Paranormal Phenomena: Chapter 1—Where Lost Spirits Go." The theme of the program was to take a scientific approach toward such paranormal phenomena as ghosts, telepathy, reincarnation, and near-death experiences. Considering the fact that most television programs of this sort are made half-heartedly, since it did take its best shot at uncovering how far modern science, equipped with cutting-edge technology, knows about such phenomena, this one by NHK could be said to at least have been made with good intentions.

In the program, near-death experiences and reincarnation was introduced as phenomena that current science seems unable to unveil.

One type of near-death experience that many people have reported commonly comprise the following series of events: One sees a spot of light on the other side of a long dark tunnel; he/she walks to the other side of the tunnel and sees a beautiful flower garden with bright sunshine, where he/she reunites with his/her

loved ones who have passed away, whom tell him/her, “You are not supposed to come here yet,” following which advice, he/she returns to his/her body and wakes up.

Regarding the near-death experience, the program provided the following scientific explanation.

Previously, heart failure was believed to be accompanied by brain death.

However, now we know that the brain continues its activities even after the heart stops sending oxygen, and that it does so for at least 30 seconds—the brain even carries on with its activities even more actively after the heart stops pumping. Brain scientists believe that near-death experiences have something to do with what is going on in the brain during those 30 seconds when it works at full power. In fact, there exists a phenomenon called the Loss Of Consciousness by G-force (G-LOC), which a number of U.S. air force pilots have reported to have undergone. The G-LOC experience is due to extreme gravity force being applied on the human body, causing blood to remain in the lower half of the body, which robs the brain of oxygen, causing the person to lose consciousness.

Many U.S. air force pilots who have undergone this G-LOC experience have reported undergoing the tunnel phenomenon as have those who underwent near-death experiences. According to the pilots, just before they lose consciousness, they underwent a

phenomenon called blackout, where they lost sight. Subsequently, they saw something resembling a tunnel leading to a white spot of light. Some reported slightly different but nonetheless very similar experiences. The pilots unanimously said they felt calm, quiet, very happy, and moving.

Because near-death experiences are reported as having happened after the stop of oxygen supply to the brain—temporarily activating the brain more vigorously—some brain scientists have taken these reports as proof that there is no world after death.

However, some near-death experiences have an aspect unexplainable just by the function of the brain. Half of those who have reported as having undergone a near-death experience have said that they have undergone a spirit-out-of-body experience as well.

Most reports of spirit-out-of-body experiences comprise a phenomenon where the experiencer slips out of his/her body and sees from above himself/herself lying on the ground. Some brain scientists say that spirit-out-of-body experiences also have to do with confusion of the brain. Swiss Federal Institute of Technology has succeeded in reproducing this spirit-out-of-body experience in the laboratory by sending the subject's eye and body sensory systems a specific type of stimuli. Based on the experiment, scientists at the Institute concluded that spirit-out-of-body experiences are also due to the brain misinterpreting data.

However, spirit-out-of-body experiences still have an aspect

that cannot be explained by the Institute's experiment, where the subject does feel himself/herself slip out of his/her body but feels nothing more beyond that point.

Many people who reported as having undergone spirit-out-of-body experiences have said that they saw themselves producing bubbles out of their mouths. Others said that they saw their doctor and/or family members watching them. In any case, those who had undergone spirit-out-of-body experiences reported some other piece of information—in addition to just saying they felt themselves slipping out of their bodies—that they would have been unable to report unless they had seen themselves from above, which is something unexplainable as data misinterpretation by the brain.

In other words, near-death experiences have an aspect unexplainable by brain science.

Another paranormal phenomenon unexplainable by science is reincarnation.

More than 2,500 children in more than 40 countries around the world have been reported as having spoken about their previous lifetimes. The University of Virginia (in the U.S.) has actively been interviewing these children. Most children spoke about their previous lifetimes until the age of three or four and most stopped talking about such lifetimes by the age of six or seven. All of these children are now leading normal lives, and when interviewed, they answered that they did not remember speaking about their previous lifetimes.

Another thing these children have in common is that they have high IQs.

Some brain scientists say that children's memories of their previous lifetimes are due to childhood amnesia, by which they mean children's memories are not clearly established before the age of two. According to this line of argument, what we refer to as "children's memories of their previous lifetimes" are just information they received before the age of two and thereby, in a sense, could be called false memories.

However, this false memory theory fails to explain why the children would be able to know about personal relationships between people living in countries unknown to them, located far away.

The memories of a boy named Ryan matched those of the life of another person, in 54 items, who passed away decades ago.

Instances of children's memories matching those of the lives of people who passed away have been identified in 35 countries around the world.

Dr. Jim Tucker, who studies reincarnation at the University of Virginia says that his study does not solely rely on memory and that children having memories from their previous lifetimes is strong proof that previous lifetimes do exist. In addition, he says that studying the instances of children having memories from their previous lifetimes has led his research team to believe that there exists something more than just the law of physics. At the end of the television program, Dr.

Tucker also made the statement along the following lines: There is an element called consciousnesses in a dimension entirely different from the world of physics. Consciousnesses are not just things planted into our brains. The existence of consciousnesses shows us that we would need a completely different mindset to understand the entirety of the universe. Our view of the universe currently sees the universe only from a materialistic perspective, believing that non-materialistic things do not exist. However, we need to reconsider our current perspective and review the universe from a completely fresh point of view.

As stated above, instances of near-death experiences and reincarnation prove that there are aspects to them unexplainable by brain science. As provided above, one scientist even stated, "There is an element called consciousnesses in a dimension entirely different from the world of physics."

The mystery of consciousnesses has also been approached from the science of quantum mechanics.

Sir Roger Penrose, one of the genius physicists of the 20th century, and Dr. Stuart Hameroff, Director of the Center for Consciousness Studies at the University of Arizona, have collaboratively proposed a hypothesis on consciousnesses, which we will examine in the following chapter.

2. The world after death according to the quantum mind hypothesis

What is the quantum mind hypothesis?

Now, I just said above that we will be examining the world of consciousness as hypothesized by Dr. Penrose and Dr. Hameroff, but to be honest, I have no idea what they hypothesized. I did buy and read a number of Dr. Penrose's books—1) Shadows of the Mind, 2) The Large, and Small and the Human Mind, and 3) Beyond the Doubting of a Shadow—hoping that I could at least tell my readers a little about his research, however I was unable to understand hardly anything.

I just remembered now, as I am writing this, that one time, after having found out that I was reading some books on quantum mechanics, Taike sensei said to me, "You'll probably not be able to understand these books, so I'll read them for you and explain them to you." Subsequently, he took my books back home with him. Since Taike sensei used to be a mathematics teacher, I was really looking forward to learning about quantum mechanics from him. However, he subsequently became ill and passed away.

After Taike sensei passed away, I bought the same books again and decided to give them another try; however, just as Taike sensei said, they were completely beyond my knowledge.

Therefore, I will have to skip the parts where Dr. Penrose and Dr. Hameroff set off to prove why they can say their hypothesis is true and just introduce the conclusion they arrived at as follows.

Eternal life

In short, quantum mind, as proposed by Dr. Penrose and Dr. Hameroff, hypothesizes that our consciousnesses are quantum pieces of information (or elementary particles). According to them, our nerve cells have inside them what they call microtubes containing quantum information, which while we are alive are attached to our brains; however, once we die, our consciousness (or quantum information) becomes released into the universe.

They argue that, however, if we become resuscitated just when we are about to die, our quantum information becomes recollected into our microtubes, and we thereby retain our consciousnesses. Near-death experiences, according to them, is a phenomenon that accompanies the recollection of quantum information, and when those about to die fail to be resuscitated, and their quantum information therefore comes to be transferred to another body, that is what they call reincarnation.

In other words, to them, consciousnesses are quantum information that exist for eternity and their conclusion is that we therefore do not die.

Miraculous information transmission

Dr. Penrose and Dr. Hameroff's hypothesis was easy to understand up to this point. However, their hypothesis contains a phenomenon called quantum entanglement, which is a little more difficult to understand. Here I will simply explain how quantum entanglement works. Let's first think about how information transmission works in a computer. In a computer, information travels through a simply traceable circuit and becomes transmitted by a signal. However, according to Dr. Penrose and Dr. Hameroff, quantum information is transmitted by a mysterious process they call quantum entanglement.

According to Dr. Hameroff, he and Dr. Penrose believe that quantum entanglement works interrelatedly with consciousnesses. For instance, he says let's say that a neuron (i.e., nerve cells that transmit stimuli) becomes activated in one place. Then, in another physically faraway place, another neuron can become activated in response to the former one. Dr. Hameroff says that two neurons, in this way, can transmit quantum information between themselves despite not coming into direct contact with one another. In addition, he says a person's quantum information could exist throughout the entire universe due to quantum entanglement of his/her consciousnesses inside his/her brain.

In addition, Dr. Hameroff says that there exists what he calls the primary consciousness, which he considers to be the most primitive form of our consciousnesses and one of the constituents

of the universe. Dr. Hameroff says that he defines the primary consciousness as an element that has existed from the beginning of the universe along with the Big Bang.

In other words, whereas the world of physics says, "What difference does one single person make?" the world of consciousness (quantum information) says, "A single person's thoughts can miraculously transmit across unbelievable distances through a process called quantum entanglement and can even influence the entire universe."

My descriptions of how Dr. Hameroff explained the quantum mind hypothesis may have become a little complicated, so allow me to restate what Dr. Hameroff said in the NHK television program titled "Where Lost Spirits Go" as follows:

When we are alive our consciousness is stored in our brain. However, once our heart stops pumping, our consciousness disperses into the universe. If a patient is resuscitated, that means that his/her quantum information returned to his/her body and thereby he/she had a near-death experience. On the other hand, if a patient cannot be resuscitated, that means his/her quantum information either remains in the universe or has come to entangle with another life, resulting in a reincarnation. We are all connected through the universe.

3. A letter to Professor Hameroff

Having read this far, you must be thinking the world of consciousness, proposed by Taike sensei, and the quantum mind hypothesis, proposed by Dr. Hameroff, sound similar. Having been listening to Taike sensei speak about the world of consciousness way back before Dr. Hameroff presented his hypothesis, to me, it feels like modern science is trying to explain the world of consciousness, proposed by Taike sensei.

The following is a summary of the concepts of death and consciousnesses described by the quantum mind hypothesis:

- The world of consciousness is not attached to the brain.
- After people die, their consciousnesses become released into the universe and they become reincarnated into another physical body.
- Until consciousnesses can be reincarnated into a physical body, they remain in the universe.
- Through a process called quantum entanglement, consciousnesses are able to influence other consciousnesses instantaneously without coming into contact with one another and could even influence the entire universe.
- Once generated, negative energies will exist for eternity.

- An element called the primary consciousness of all people exists somewhere in the universe.
- We are all connected through the universe.

The two proposals do sound very similar.

Taike sensei proposed that we are not our physical bodies but consciousnesses that exist for eternity. In addition, whenever someone said, “Even if a person could change, one person changing would not make a difference,” Taike sensei said, “If you change, you will influence many others and even influence the universe. That is how the world of consciousness works.”

In this way, already more than 40 years before Dr. Hameroff’s hypothesis, Taike sensei had been speaking about concepts similar to what has today come to be proposed in the field of quantum mechanics.

So the world of consciousness proposed by Taike sensei and that proposed in the field of quantum mind are very similar. However, the quantum mind hypothesis lacks one extremely important point.

Therefore, I decided to write the following letter to Dr. Hameroff, had a friend of mine translate it into English, and sent it to Dr. Hameroff by email.

Dear Dr. Hameroff,

My name is Toshiaki Kiryu, and I work at a small publishing company in the countryside of Nara Prefecture, Japan, called UTA Book. Thank you very much for taking your time to read this email.

The theme of my publishing company is to help people reflect on themselves from the perspective of the world of consciousness. Almost all of the books my company has published has been about telling our readers to reflect on the world inside them, instead of trying to change the world outside them.

I myself learned from someone—a former school principal of a public high school in Osaka Prefecture, Japan, named Tomekichi Taike—that the real world is the world of consciousness and that the physical world is a shadow of the real world. Ever since the, I have been working at publishing companies with the aim of helping Mr. Tomekichi Taike inform as many people as possible about the world of consciousnesses.

To clarify why I contacted you, allow me to provide you with an outline of what Mr. Tomekichi Taike has taught me about the world of consciousness as follows:

＊ We all came from the world of consciousness to the physical world and came to have a physical body.
＊ Therefore, we are not our physical bodies but consciousnesses.

＊ A consciousness is an existence free from such concepts as the past, present, and future and is connected with the universe.

＊ However, as a result of coming to have a physical body and thereby becoming able to see, hear, smell, taste, and touch, we came to believe that the physical world is the real world. Consequently, we came to believe that, to become happy, we need to satisfy our physical body, which then led to various forms of sufferings, including such desires as controlling others and becoming wealthy and famous. Our belief that we are our physical bodies also created such other forms of sufferings stemming from such desires as to compete, win wars, and discriminate, which then led to envying others, feeling anxious, and feeling lonely.

＊ Hoping to free ourselves from such sufferings, we invented religions and relied on them, believing that they would help us relieve our sufferings; however, doing so only increased our sufferings.

＊ As long as we continue to believe that our physical bodies are ourselves and that the physical world is the real world, none of our problems and sufferings will be resolved.

＊ The feelings that our hearts have come to feel as a result of us coming to have our physical bodies are negative energies. We continuously radiate our negative energies into the universe. By "continuously radiate," I mean the negative energies we generated during not only our current lifetime but also numerous past

lifetimes, of which ourselves and also the universe is full.

＊ The reason all of us were born is to convert our suffering negative energies to positive ones.

＊ To do so, the first thing we need to do is realize that we are suffering.

＊ To realize that we are suffering, the first thing we need to do is reflect on our feelings that surfaced toward our biological mothers by writing as much as we can remember as far back in our life as possible. The aim in doing so is not to remember the type of person our mother is/was but to recall our feelings that surfaced toward our own mother. This is the biggest step toward knowing ourselves.

＊ Mr. Tomekichi Taike says that once we realize that we are suffering, we can convert our negative energies to positive ones by accepting our sufferings. This process is almost endless. However, the reason we came to have our physical bodies is to clean our own world of consciousness that we ourselves ruined, and to do so, we need to convert our negative energies to positive ones before we return to the world of consciousness.

The outline above may not be the entire picture of what Mr. Tomekichi Taike has taught me, but it shows the general direction in which he has guided me so that I can return to mother universe.

Next, allow me to draw the best outline I can of your hypothesis as follows:

＊ The world of consciousness is not attached to the brain.

→ Both you and Mr. Tomekichi Taike agree on this point.

＊ After people die, their consciousnesses become released into the universe and they become reincarnated into another physical body.

＊ Until consciousnesses can be reincarnated into a physical body, they remain in the universe.

→ Both you and Mr. Tomekichi Taike agree on these points as well.

＊ An element called the primary consciousness of all people exists somewhere in the universe.

→ The two of you differ on this point. Mr. Tomekichi Taike proposes a mother universe, which is the world that we will one day return to.

＊ We are all connected through the universe.

→ Both you and Mr. Tomekichi Taike agree on this point.

＊ Once generated, negative energies will exist for eternity.

→ This is the point where the two of you greatly differ. As stated above in the underlined sentences, Mr. Tomekichi Taike says that we are able to convert our negative energies to positive ones and that to do so is the very reason we came to have our physical bodies.

I am interested in what you think about the above items.

Do you think that our negative energies that we have been continuously radiating ever since we have come to have our physical bodies are inconvertible to positive ones?

In addition, please note that in the preceding, I have simply outlined the similarities and differences between your hypothesis and Mr. Tomekichi Taike's proposal, based on the terms that you used in describing your hypothesis. However, there is a more fundamental difference between your hypothesis and Mr. Tomekichi Taike's proposal. In the following at the end of this chapter, there is a message that had been received by Ms. Kayo Shiokawa through channeling, in which she says that in their attempt at clarifying what the world of consciousness is, all researchers have taken their approach from the perspective of the physical world, or in other words, taken approaches based on the belief that their physical bodies are themselves.

However, the truth cannot be understood without making the turn of consciousness, which Mr. Tomekichi Taike proved to be the most important point in his study of the heart.

Thank you very much for taking your time to read this letter. I would very much appreciate it if you could kindly let me know what you thought of this letter. Thank you very much.

4. The turn of consciousness and the purpose of life

I have no idea whether Dr. Hameroff will write me back, but one thing I hope I have achieved is, by providing readers with a general idea of how paranormal phenomena is being approached in quantum mechanics, one of the cutting-edge fields of modern science, I have been able to convince them that the topics being tackled in this book are not as heavily religious as they may have initially sounded.

Another thing I hope I achieved is clarifying what Taike sensei means by the world of consciousness.

One point is that we are not our physical bodies but consciousnesses, which are not something attached to our brains. Another point is that the quantum mind hypothesis, despite attempting to clarify what the world of consciousness is, lacks the most important presupposition to such an approach, which is the turn of consciousness. In other words, the quantum mind hypothesis does not give any thought to the reason we are born, which as Taike sensei says, is to make that turn of consciousness.

Now, let me explain what the concept of the turn of consciousness is, which I have not really touched on up to this point. The turn of consciousness is an important concept, without

which we cannot truly speak of the reason we were born.

In explaining this concept, allow me to restate how it is explained in Ishiki no Tenkai (The Turn of Consciousness) as follows:

Have you ever heard of the phrase "the turn of consciousness"?

Before asking you that question, I suppose I should have asked whether you ever use the word "consciousness" in your daily life.

You might be using the word in such phrases as "direct your consciousness toward something" or "change the orientation of your consciousness."

But have you ever heard of the phrase "the turn of consciousness"? I assume you haven't. Now, what does the phrase "the turn of consciousness" mean? I assume this phrase is new to many of you.

I admit it is a phrase we do not hear very often. Therefore, allow me to first state the following.

About thirty years ago, a seminar was held under the following theme:

"Our true selves are invisible to our eyes. Our physical body is not our true selves. Instead, we are consciousnesses, vibrations, and energies that exist for eternity."

The single condition required to understanding the preceding statement was making the turn of consciousness.

Making “the turn of consciousness” may sound like a difficult goal to achieve, but all it requires is changing the basis of your life.

I assume those who are new to this study of the heart may be thinking, “What does the writer mean by ‘the basis of your life?’ or by ‘changing the basis of your life’?”

Now, to answer these questions, I first need you to consider the following.

First of all, there are two types of bases.

The first type is visible to the eye, audible to the ear, and touchable with the hand, or in other words, exists in the tangible world. Allow me to refer to this type of basis as “A.” The second type of basis exists in the intangible world and thereby has no form but is able to be felt with one’s heart. I will refer to this type of basis as “B.”

Almost everyone currently leads their lives on the basis of “A.” Without stopping to question another possibility, most of us believe that the physical world, which is visible and audible, is the real world.

We assume such roles as spouses, mothers/fathers, and children, based on the basis of “A.” In addition, presidents of companies, politicians, those with other jobs, and others out of work, all lead their lives on the basis of “A.”

In addition, we all distinguish ourselves from others, based on

our facial appearances and other physical features. We also all have names, with which we distinguish ourselves.

In this way, the physical world is based on tangible features of the world. That is the world seen on the basis of "A."

We perceive ourselves and our surroundings based on physical features and try to pursue happiness in the physical world by finding the meaning of life, a reason to live, and a goal to accomplish during life. This has always been the same.

In the physical world, the indicator most often used to judge whether one is doing well or not is money. The most prominent feature of the world seen on the basis of "A" is that it is based on money. (Partly omitted)

Another prominent feature of the world seen on the basis of "A" is that wars never disappear. No matter how seriously we hope for peace, hope to be on friendly terms with one another, make an effort to holding meetings with each other, and try to find win-win solutions to our issues, in a world based on the basis of "A," putting an end to the negative energy of war is unfortunately impossible. This has already been proven by the history of humankind.

By war, in this context, I do not only mean combats that kill people in an instant with missiles and guns. We tend to think that wars are taking place in such contexts where people kill each other; however, wars take place in our hearts.

Criticizing, attacking, and trying to destroy others and

radiating negative energies on one another in the process is what war is in the world of consciousness.

In the world seen on the basis of "A," it is not an exaggeration to say that we are all continuously radiating negative energies of war.

I believe my point is clear, which is that even the quantum mind hypothesis, based on one of modern science's cutting-edge fields of quantum mechanics, is based on the basis of "A." The quantum mind hypothesis is trying to clarify what the world of consciousness is without making the turn of consciousness.

As I have mentioned above, my fear of death, which I know has always been my deepest fear also in previous lifetimes, has its roots in the sufferings that my heart has felt in my previous reincarnations, all of which saw the world, based on the basis of "A."

Our sufferings are not very clearly felt while we are alive; however, once we die, we all fall head down into our own feeling of suffering.

Our feeling of suffering is an energy; therefore, we are radiating our suffering negative energies across the universe. Our negative energies can only be converted to positive ones by ourselves. In other words, the only person who can heal your suffering is yourself. The reason we are born is to convert are own negative energies to positive ones. That is why we reincarnate. We give the converting of negative

energies to positive ones another try. However, once we come to believe that our physical bodies are ourselves, instead of being able to convert negative energies, we accumulate more.

Taike sensei says the primary reason we come to have a physical body is to save ourselves from our own chain of suffering.

The universe of consciousnesses is currently screaming, swallowed by the negative energies that have been generated by us. This scream will soon surface as natural disasters and swallow the physical world.

The series of natural disasters soon to occur are our final chance for realizing the truth by making the turn of consciousness.

Taike sensei says that the only way we can save ourselves is by reflecting on ourselves to realize that we are suffering and then accepting ourselves as suffering.

The flow of consciousness is approaching its final stage, where we all must realize that we are not our physical bodies but consciousnesses.

Consciousness comes first

The world of consciousness has no limits.

On the other hand, approaches taken by cutting-edge, modern science research into the world of consciousness are based on the physical world, which has limits. Therefore, no matter how advanced modern science may become, there will be its limits. A limited world will always have its limits.

Cutting-edge science research will never be able to overcome its limits. In other words, the human brain will never be able to overcome its limits. The world of consciousness, which is one with no limits, cannot be approached from a world with limits.

The world of consciousness comes first. It is not an exaggeration to say that cutting-edge science is part of the world of consciousness to begin with.

In other words, how close a researcher's efforts can come to understanding the world of consciousness depends on the degree at which he/she understands the world of consciousness with his/her own heart.

Therefore, what matters is the researcher's basis—

i.e., if the researcher's basis is one that sees the physical world as the real world, no matter how talented he/she may be or how advanced his/her research may become, the outcome will never overcome the limits of the physical world. In addition, as long as one stays in a world with limits, he/she will never be able to understand the true world. The two worlds fundamentally differ. All I can say is we need to change the basis of our life.

The message from the world of consciousness asks us to change the basis of our lives.

What matters is which world one chooses to set as the basis of his/her life.

What matters is which world is originally the basis of human life.

We are all consciousnesses, vibrations, and energies. What matters is how well each and every one of us understands that with our hearts.

If those who engage themselves in cutting-edge science research into the world of consciousness come to

understand the preceding with their heart, their research would come to be conducted based on the rules of the world of consciousness and therefore come closer to achieving results reflecting the truth.

However, such results still would not be 100% accurate.

What does it mean to even attempt to approach the world of consciousness from the perspective of cutting-edge science? My answer to this question is that one is not taking the world of consciousness seriously. In other words, those who conduct such research do not know themselves very well. They disrespect the world of consciousness.

We all need to realize the stupidity in attempting to understand a world with no limits from the perspective of a world with limits.

Kayo Shiokawa

Column:Ms. U's experience

At a seminar held in Kashiwara City in 2015, titled "Love; You Are Love," there were opportunities to turn our hearts toward the condition of our hearts in the dimension of death. When I turned my heart toward myself in the dimension of death, I felt a world only describable as raging energies. I did not know whether I was facing the ceiling or the floor. I only knew that a dark energy was swallowing me. It felt as if I was in the middle of a raging storm and as if my body was about to burst into dust.

Just when I thought I could not take it anymore, I heard Taike sensei say, "Thank you. That is the end of this round," and I returned to my normal state.

I learned how intensely my heart was raging in the world after death and came to understand, with my heart, the condition I will be in after death. At the same time, I strongly felt that I must not die in the state I am in now. I must not die without converting my negative energies to positive ones. I promised myself that I will spend the rest of my life on making the turn of consciousness and converting energies as I promised myself before birth so that my determination in continuing to do so can be

passed on to my next lifetime.

Death used to be pure fear. Reincarnating up until now was pure fear because it had meant returning to that intensely raging world of death.

Through opportunities to turn my heart toward my mother, her warmth, and love by meditating, I learned that there is one thing we can do in that dark raging world of death. It is to call our true selves. Throughout the rest of my life, during which I will turn my heart toward myself in the dimension of death, I will practice calling my true self and continue doing so as hard as I can.

(Shiga Prefecture)

Chapter 4

Flow of Consciousness

1. Meditation on yourself existing in the dimension of death

Although irregularly, opportunities to turn our hearts toward ourselves in the dimension of death are being offered via the Internet. As I mentioned above, since the aim of these opportunities is to understand the condition of one's heart in the dimension of death, they are not publicly offered. Another reason these opportunities are not publicly offered is, while insensitive people can safely turn their heart toward themselves in the dimension of death, those who are sensitive could go insane by doing so unless properly trained to control themselves while practicing such type of meditation.

During the days Taike sensei was around to help us, seminars provided opportunities to train ourselves to understand the darkness of our hearts. Normally, the practice of meditation comprises closing one's eyes and staying quiet. For instance, in the world of Zen, practitioners close their eyes halfway and try to direct their eyes about one meter ahead from where they are sitting.

In any case, meditation is supposed to be a quiet practice; quiet enough for one to be able to even hear the drop of a needle—I suppose this is the image most people have of meditation.

On the other hand, while I am not sure whether the phrase "darkness-freeing meditation" sounds right, I assume meditating to

understand the darkness of our hearts is a lot different from what one would imagine meditation to be.

I will refrain from going into too much detail, but darkness-freeing meditation begins with one calming oneself down and then turning his/her heart toward his/her dark thoughts hidden in the bottom of his/her heart.

As one turns his/her heart toward his/her dark thoughts, he/she will feel a burst of energy swirl toward himself/herself. Gradually, one will become unable to keep confronting the energy that comes bursting from deep down and begin to scream, roll around, and thrash about, cursing everything around.

The way that dark thoughts surface differs from one person to another, and even with the same person, there is no certain pattern the way dark thoughts surface. Feeling one's dark thoughts is a step into this study that should only be practiced after one has reflected enough on his/her mother and his/her mistakes of asking others for salvation. If one practiced darkness-freeing meditation without reflecting enough on the preceding two items, one will only be risking sanity, since he/she would be unable to control of himself/herself.

It would be like opening Pandora's box without knowing how to close it; or setting a monster of suffering free.

Once we die, we will have to face this monster of suffering without anywhere to hide.

While we are alive, there are places to hide or ways to distract

ourselves; however, once we die, our bodies will be gone, leaving our hearts exposed to our sufferings.

The aim of darkness-freeing meditation is to feel with our bodies the darkness of our hearts—first felt through reflection on our mother and on our mistakes of asking others for salvation—and accept it, instead of denying that it exists. However, before practicing darkness-freeing meditation, one must ensure that he/she knows his/her mother's warmth; unless ones does, rather than being able to accept his/her own darkness, he/she will be swallowed by it. Nonetheless, only by practicing darkness-freeing meditation can we accept our darkness that we have accumulated over our countless past lifetimes and pat them on the back and say, "I know how it feels to be suffering, but we can now return to mother universe."

I earlier referred to our suffering negative energies as a "monster of suffering," which I admit was not a nice thing to say, considering the fact that our negative energies are also ourselves and our friends from the past.

After Taike sensei passed away, Ms. Kayo Shiokawa has been holding seminars to this day under the theme of "turning our hearts toward the very bottom of our hearts." I truly look forward to seeing readers of this book attend these seminars. These seminars may look like attending practitioners are suffering and thrashing about while meditating. However, they are not only suffering but also feeling very happy at the same time. This is something one would need to

experience himself/herself to understand. Feeling ourselves suffering yet feeling happy at the same time is what we call darkness-freeing meditation. Attending practitioners may be noisy, but one will likely find the venue as being mysteriously enshrouded by warmth.

The training that follows darkness-freeing meditation is turning one's heart toward oneself in the dimension of death, or the world after death.

In turning our hearts toward ourselves in the dimension of death, we first begin by turning our heart toward Tomekichi Taike. That said, that does not mean that we see Taike sensei as a guru.

We begin by turning our hearts toward Tomekichi Taike, because doing so allows us to turn our hearts toward the world of consciousness. This is because Taike sensei was the person who let us know that we are not our physical bodies but consciousnesses. Taike sensei taught us that asking any god for help in order to save our physical bodies was a mistake. In other words, we came to know through Taike sensei the danger of turning our hearts toward wrong entities.

We first turn our hearts toward Tomekichi Taike so that our hearts will not become turned toward wrong entities.

To those practicing this study, Tomekichi Taike is our mother's warmth, our true selves, the world of consciousness, and mother universe.

Next, let me talk about death. There are multiple ways in which one could die. One could die from an accident, an illness, or natural cause. We do not know how we will die, but for the sake of discussion, please imagine you died due to some cause.

Taike sensei says immediately after we die, most of us do not even notice we died. However, after a while, we all realize we are dead.

However, when turning our hearts toward ourselves in the dimension of death, since we know we are doing so, we begin from the point where we realize we are in the world after death.

As soon as one realizes he/she is dead, our sufferings, which until then had a lid on, will burst toward ourselves. It will feel as if we could not breathe, were being crushed, and our blood were draining from our body. Even after we come to calm down a little, the feeling of being pressed down, anxious, and uncomfortable will persist.

When I first began to practice turning my heart toward myself in the dimension of death, I aimed at becoming used to those feelings. I recommend practicing accepting your true self as suffering and telling your true self, "Let's return to mother universe." We can practice doing so because we are alive. Practicing accepting ourselves as suffering and telling ourselves to cooperate in returning to mother universe is something we can only do now; once we are dead, we will not be able to concentrate on practicing this.

One time, following many opportunities to implement the

preceding practice, I began as usual, feeling myself suffering. Subsequently, as I always do, I tried to accept myself as suffering. Then, for the first time, I felt a warmth inside myself, calling back to myself, "Let's return to mother universe."

Whereas the message "Let's return to mother universe," used to be a one-way message, there was another consciousness inside me sending back the same message. I first thought I must just be thinking it in my head, but I am sure that was not the case. Now I am convinced it is myself in my future lifetime sending me back the message I have been sending.

The world after death is surrounded by suffering thoughts that we ourselves generated; however, once we realize and accept that we are suffering, the world after death becomes a wonderland with no limits both temporarily and spatially. Your consciousnesses that exist in the world after death are not only those from your past lifetimes but also from your future lifetimes. Whenever I turn my heart toward the consciousness of my future lifetime, it does the same for me. Whenever I turn my heart toward the consciousnesses that suffered in my past lifetimes, they do the same for me. That is the universe of consciousnesses, or the world after death.

Recently, while turning my heart toward myself in the dimension of death, although I still feel myself suffering, I have also become able to feel that all consciousnesses are my friends with whom I want to return to mother universe.

The world after death is not just a world of suffering, it is a world where we can actually feel the flow of consciousness. As Taike sensei said, the flow of consciousness is something we can feel with our heart, rather than understand with our head.

In the next chapter, I would like to return from the world after death to the physical world and try to demonstrate what Taike sensei calls the flow of consciousness by using common knowledge.

2. Natural disasters

Taike sensei says our true selves are not our physical bodies but consciousnesses that have existed for thousands, millions, and even billions of years, reincarnating to return to mother universe.

Our consciousnesses have come to have our physical bodies in this three-dimensional materialistic world.

Even since then, because living in the physical world led us to wrongly believe that we are our physical bodies, we have come to generate negative energies and radiate them across the universe, as evident from the history of humankind.

We have reached the point where we need to pay off our negative energies. The amount of negative energy that we have generated has reached the saturation point of the world of consciousness. The world of consciousness is currently therefore trying to resolve this problem in its own way, and the method it chose to do so is natural disasters.

Taike sensei says that natural disasters will have great effects on a large number of consciousnesses. The love of the world of consciousness has begun to perform its job of helping us all realize the mistakes of our hearts.

If we see ourselves as our physical bodies, natural disasters

are nothing more than tragedies that we would be better off without. However, if we see ourselves as not our physical bodies but as consciousnesses, natural disasters are energies of love that can help us realize the mistakes of our hearts.

Taike sensei talks about what natural disasters truly are in a book titled Along With Mother Universe through Ms. Kayo Shiokawa, which I restate as follows:

Natural disasters are generally considered to be natural phenomena that threaten our daily lives, including earthquakes, typhoons, hurricanes, floods, tsunami waves, droughts, blizzards, and tornados.

Natural disasters destroy our homes, take away our lives, and cause us to have to live in inconvenience. They do us absolutely no good.

Recently, Japan is also experiencing unprecedented natural disasters, including record-breaking downpours and hot summers. However, I assume not many people stop to think what these natural disasters could mean.

Once we begin to experience earthquakes rather frequently, we all get used to having a few shakes now and then. We just think, “Oh, the ground’s shaking somewhere again.”

Record-breaking phenomena, the unthinkable, and frequent recurrences all point us toward the same direction.

The one thing they all have in common is that they are symptoms of cataclysms that will be occurring soon.

The natural disasters that are about to occur are nothing like those we have experienced up until now.

Symptoms of cataclysms have presented themselves in countries and regions across the world, including Japan. However, we have only so far experienced their symptoms; their true energies are nothing compared to natural disasters we have so far experienced.

Now, the thing we need to know is what matters is how we deal with cataclysms.

As I have mentioned above, natural disasters take away our lives and possessions. How are our hearts originally supposed to deal with such phenomena that take away everything from us?

People who do not know the truth (i.e., that we are consciousnesses) will likely curse natural disasters.

They will likely curse god(s) or fear that they must have done something to make god(s) angry.

In fact, in our past lifetimes, we have repeatedly died due to natural disasters, and as we died, we have always cursed god(s) or feared we must have made them angry.

We also lost our loved ones to natural disasters.

How could a person who believes his/her physical body is himself/herself possibly see natural disasters as warmth or love?

We all must be thinking, “I would rather lead my entire life

quietly in peace without encountering a serious natural disaster."

In Japan, as in other countries I assume, disaster preparedness research is being conducted in various fields, based on actual data. I assume communities are also conducting regular disaster-preparedness drills.

In addition, in the event of a disaster, self-defense force troops and volunteer organizations will likely come to the rescue to help disaster-struck regions recover, and charity money and emergency supplies will likely be sent from across the nation.

Critical infrastructure—electricity, gas, water, and roads—will be restored as soon as possible. Phone calls and emails trying to cheer up disaster victims will also be sent from across the nation. Experts on mental healthcare will also likely try to help disaster victims feel better.

Disasters we have had so far are of the sort where, although it does take time, communities recover to states equivalent to those they were in before.

However, what would happen if such disasters occurred one after another with minimum intervals in multiple regions across the nation?

One may wait for help to arrive, but it may never come. While waiting for help, another disaster may occur, followed by yet another one, making one feel as if no one cared to help. Cases where help arrives but not in time to save victims will likely occur too.

In addition, large cities will likely become destroyed in an instant and abandoned.

Japan did indeed restore itself from destruction following World War II. Subsequently, whereas all the citizens of Japan after restoration considered themselves as middle class, now economic disparity keeps increasing. The wealthy are becoming wealthier, while more people are coming to suffer in poverty. Furthermore, Japan faces more issues than ever before both domestically and internationally. While this is the reality of current Japan, other than those issues described above, the nation is enjoying peace.

However, what will happen to the country when the aforementioned cataclysms finally occur?

Could the nation recover from multiple natural disasters, like it restored itself after World War II?

I doubt it will be able to.

Nevertheless, those who survived will need to lead their lives in one way or another.

Those who survived will feel devastated, having lost everything they cared for. Having been living in peace for their entire lives, they will not be ready for such a situation. In other words, they will feel like living in hell while alive.

Their hearts will be completely torn apart that no mental healthcare expert will be able to help them.

We all need to be pushed to the edges of our lives if we are to

reflect on ourselves.

Natural disasters occur to push us to the edges of our lives so that we can finally realize the foolishness in searching outside ourselves for salvation, asking to be saved by god(s), Buddha, and the powers of the universe, instead of reflecting on ourselves.

If one comes to be pushed to the edges of his/her life, that is also a scenario that he/she wrote for himself/herself.

Natural disasters are self-prepared scenarios, so cursing god(s) for them will not improve the situation. That is what we were unaware of in our past lifetimes.

We lead our lives, based on self-prepared scenarios. In other words, our lives are performances, performed by ourselves with the aim of helping ourselves realize the truth by sending us messages.

We send ourselves such messages as “Let’s return to the time when we were truly happy,” “Let’s recall what true warmth felt like,” and/or “Now is the time to return to mother universe.”

Natural disasters are nothing other than tragedies to our false selves; however, they are essential for us to realize who we truly are.

The energy that flows from natural disasters is the energy of love that allows us to realize who we truly are.

3. Moving onto the next dimension

Having read this far, how much of what is written in this book do you believe?

Natural disasters will strike countries throughout the world over the next 250 to 300 years, trying to help everyone realize that they are not their physical bodies but consciousnesses.

The step following the realization that we are consciousnesses is to move onto the next dimension. So far, this three-dimensional materialistic world has been the venue for us to reflect on ourselves; however, we will be moving onto the next dimension and entering a new stage of the study of the heart.

What the next stage is like is something completely beyond our imagination, since we have been leading our past and current lifetimes in this materialistic world under the belief that our physical bodies are our true selves. Therefore, to prepare ourselves for the next stage, we need to understand the flow of consciousness with our hearts.

Taike sensei spoke about moving onto the next dimension and about the flow of consciousness as follows:

The flow of consciousness shows that we will be moving onto the next dimension along with the universe. Therefore, I would like

to speak a little about the universe.

The flow of consciousness and the universe, as well as the universe and us, are inseparable. Feeling the universe with one's heart is extremely important. The universe is our world of consciousness.

When I use the word "universe," I do not mean the solar system or the galaxy.

The universe is the world of consciousness and of vibrations; it is not something we can understand with our heads. However, the universe can be felt by anyone with his/her heart if he/she becomes sensitive. This is because the universe is us. Inside our hearts is a universe that spreads and spreads limitlessly. We are that universe that spreads limitlessly. That is the universe with which I am saying we will be moving onto the next dimension.

Along with all consciousnesses existing throughout the universe—some will have a physical body, others will not—we will be leaving this three-dimensional world and moving onto the next dimension. We will be doing so over the 50 years from 250 years from now, beginning with an unbelievable reunion. That is what the flow of consciousness is. I wanted to tell everyone reading this that is the flow of which you too are a part.

In a sentence, "We are not our physical bodies but consciousnesses" describes the essence of The Flow of

Consciousness, the textbook of the study of the heart, or Taike sensei's will.

I am still in the process of pursuing the study of the heart, so I am not exactly confident that I have been able to describe the study in the way it should be to readers new to this study. However, this book, which began with a description of my fear of death and with the intention to provide readers with a simulation of Taike sensei's seminars, is about to reach its end.

To all readers of this book, I would like to encourage you to take this book as an opportunity to take up the practice of reflecting on yourself, instead of searching outside your heart for all causes of all consequences.

Column:Ms. S's experience

One spring day when I was a college student, on my way home from school, I lost consciousness. The last thing I remember before losing consciousness was seeing a car on my left after I began to ride my bicycle across the bicycle crossing after checking that the traffic signal had changed to green.

After a while, I heard someone say, "Are you alright?" followed by the siren of an ambulance truck. However, I could not open my eyes or move. The next thing I know, I was lying inside the truck and I heard the voice of a paramedic asking me some questions. I remember thinking, "This could be it for me," as I began to lose consciousness. I also remember asking the paramedic whether I will be alright and being told not to speak at the moment. (Partly omitted)

After a moment, I lost consciousness again. I then regained consciousness at the hospital. I heard noises, which I later recognized were people speaking, but could not open my eyes. Then I heard someone say, "Her pupils are beginning to dilate." I do not remember exactly what happened after this point other than the fact that I realized I was alive. Immediately after regaining

consciousness at the hospital, I remember feeling like the world became brighter and fresher and my heart felt lighter, which to me was mysterious. I later learned that when the car hit me, both me and my bicycle bounced off it, and I fell to the ground face down with my bicycle lying on top of me. I scratched my left eyelid but none of my bones were broken; however, my face was swollen like the ghost of Oiwasan (lit. Ms. Rock). As soon as the hospital allowed visitors to meet me, my parents came. Seeing my face, they seemed extremely worried and said, “What happened to your face.” My parents were about to cry. However, I was not worried at all; nor did I feel any fear. I just felt like I was reborn. At the moment inside the ambulance truck, I considered the possibility of death, and by doing so, in a sense, I experienced death. After surviving the accident and up to this moment, I took being alive for granted. Now that I have been given this opportunity to reflect on my near-death experience, I realized how arrogant I was to have not used my near-death experience as a turning point. As my consciousness began to fade away, I remember feeling my own thoughts and those of my cells. I felt my cells simply being there

with me. My cells felt like my mother. Other than that, I was just lying there with my own thoughts.

Just recently, I do not remember exactly since when, but I began to have these dreams where I die. I think I am practicing dying in my dreams. My dreams contain moments where I begin to lose consciousness like when I did after the traffic accident, which make my dreams feel all the more realistic. My dreams do not follow the same pattern. Sometimes I feel my physical strength draining away. Other times I am in a car driving full speed and fall off a cliff. Yet in other ones I experience being swallowed by a tsunami wave after an earthquake. Every time I have one of these dreams, they seem real and I find myself actually saying out loud, "Tomekichi Taike!" I think I am preparing myself for my own death.

(Nara Prefecture)

Afterword

Momo, the bottlenose dolphin

Did you enjoy this book about a history nerd's fear of death with some short stories about other's near-death experiences?

Ever since I was young, I always liked history. But my interest was not clarifying historical mysteries, finding parts of the past that have not yet been discovered, or becoming famous as a historian. I was always interested in people.

Like the saying "Bystanders see more of the game than the players themselves do," deciding on whom to study, gathering information about that person, visiting places where that person went, and turning your heart toward that person can tell you how he/she must have felt under certain circumstances. That is what I thought until I met Taike sensei. Before I met Taike sensei, I thought I could learn about people by studying the history of humankind, but I was wrong.

Although I thought I came to understand the way my target must have felt, it was the other way around. My target had shown me how I would feel under certain circumstances.

Until realizing this, I thought I was facing my target; however, who I was truly facing was myself.

I am not saying that one cannot pursue the study of the heart

without learning about the history of humankind. Studying the history of humankind as a way of pursuing the study of the heart can be rather inefficient; doing so also contains the risk of wasting one's time on fooling around while trying to find out about one's past lifetimes.

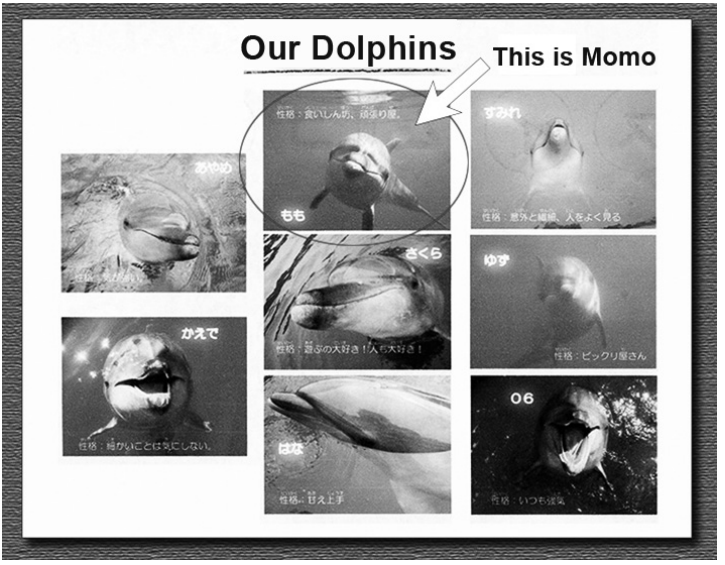
I am just saying that in my case, because I was interested in history, I felt closer to people of the past than of the present and my interest led me to the study of the heart.

While this book contains references to many Buddhist monks, there are many others who caught my attention both in the Eastern and Western worlds. However, since referring to each and every one of these people would take too many pages, instead of talking about people who have passed away, I will talk about a female dolphin currently living.

I have spoken about her in other books. One of the last things that Taike sensei asked me to do before passing away was studying dolphins. So this female dolphin has become one of my interests that occupies a large part of my heart.

The year before he passed away—I remember it was in December—Taike sensei talked about dolphins and whales, saying, "They are very similar to humans. I myself am interested in them." He said dolphins and whales were animals that, like humans, we can communicate through our hearts without relying on words.

I believe we can communicate with all living things with our



A pamphlet my niece brought back from Awaji Janohire Outdoor Resort

hearts, instead of with just dolphins and whales, but perhaps they are closer to us than other animals. That day in December, a year before passing away, Taike sensei said, while speaking in front of everyone, “Mr. Kiryu, I want you to try talking to dolphins and whales.”

So Taike sensei asked me to talk with them; however, I was never told what to talk with them about. Anyway, that is why I became interested in dolphins and whales, and subsequently, I did a little experiment to see whether we can really communicate with

dolphins without relying on words.

We rely on words in communicating with one another. Therefore, we tend to believe what we hear. However, interestingly, even if we say, “You are a nice person,” if we are actually thinking, “I hate this guy,” when saying so, in contrary to our words, the feeling we convey with our words are “I hate you.”

On the other hand, animals do not rely on words. Instead, they chirp or bark to convey their happy feelings, anger, and sorrow. In other words, they use vibrations. Taike sensei says, the animals that most heavily rely on vibrations for communication are dolphins and whales.

However, can we really communicate our thoughts/feelings with vibrations between dolphins and whales? Here is the experiment I conducted.

The photo above is an extract from a pamphlet handed to every participant in Awaji Janohire Outdoor Resort’s swim course program at the Resort’s dolphin farm. The photo shows all the dolphins at the farm with descriptions of their characteristics underneath them. My niece participated in a dolphin swim program and brought back the pamphlet for me. After receiving the pamphlet, I began my experiment.

First, I selected one dolphin as my subject. I had no particular criteria for selecting my subject, so I decided to go with the dolphin named “Momo” because I used to like reading stories written by

Michael Ende and Momo was one of his notable works. Under Momo's photo, it said that she likes to eat a lot and is a hard worker.

I took a photo of Momo with my mobile phone, and whenever I had the time, I looked at the photo and spoke to it in my heart. I began with saying hello, did a self-introduction, and then told Momo that I will soon be visiting the Resort to see her. I also turned my heart toward Momo sometimes without looking at her photo. I did this for about two weeks.

Because I am a terrible swimmer, I took private lessons at a swimming school. However, I could not overcome my fear of water and did not become able to swim after all. So I thought I would have to give up swimming with Momo. However, I did learn how to float on water, and since participants in the Resort's dolphin swim programs will be wearing life jackets anyway, I did not need to worry about drowning. After realizing this, I thought I did prepare myself rather good.

So a few days later, my wife and I went to Awaji Janohire Outdoor Resort. First, we checked in at the Resort and then signed up for a dolphin swim program. We had some time until the program, so we decided to walk around the dolphin pools. What I was most interested in, of course, was how my experiment was going. Throughout these two weeks, I had been turning my heart toward Momo and speaking to her.

However, finally coming close to meeting Momo, although

I was looking forward to this day, I also thought, “No way. Communicating just by turning my heart toward a dolphin is not going to happen.”

So I was kind of giving up my hopes by the time I found Momo’s dolphin pool.

“There it was!”

On the glass of a pool in the middle of two others a name tag said “Momo”; one of the two next to which said “Yuzu.”

“So, this is Momo’s dolphin pool!” I thought, immediately after which, I heard a big splash behind me, and cold water came pouring on my head.

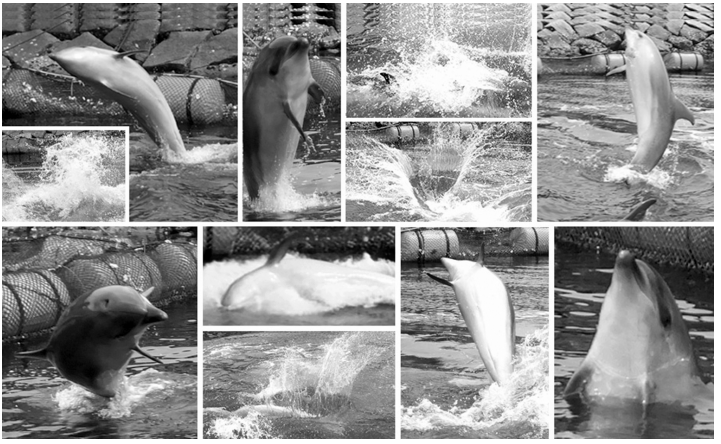
Surprised, I turned to see who it was.

It was both Momo and Yuzu. The two began jumping around for a while. I took my camera out, but since it was not set on rapid-shot mode, I took one photo after another but could not keep up with Momo and Yuzu at a pace that would allow me to capture them jumping around. But the two kept jumping.

Because the jumping seemed endless, a female farm keeper came to our rescue.

According to her, dolphins jump when they want to be fed or want to play. They usually jump two to three times. However, Momo and Yuzu were jumping more than 10 times. As far as I counted, they jumped at least 20 times.

Of course, they did not seem to be trying to threaten us.



Momo and Yuzu jumping over and over again!

"My experiment worked!" I thought.

I thought could be wrong, but still tears came streaming down my face as I continued to take photos.

I felt embarrassed, being a grown old man, but then thought, "Thanks to the splashing water, no one will notice my tears."

By the time the farm keeper came to our rescue, the jumping had settled down and so had the rippling across the pool water.

"Maybe the jumping and my being there had nothing to do with each other," I subsequently thought. However, a year later, when another dolphin farm called Dolphin Farm Shimanami opened and Momo was transferred to the new dolphin farm,

I decided to visit Momo as part of my business trip to gather information.

That is when I became convinced that Momo and I were able to communicate with our heart. Despite the fact that we had only met once, Momo remembered me.

Now, let me get back to this story later and speak a little about my first-in-my-lifetime dolphin swim experience.

The names of the dolphins that swam with me were Kaede and Sakura.

First, I had an opportunity to swim around the pool while hanging on to Kaede's dorsal fin. The same farm keeper who came to our rescue told me, "Just hang on to Kaede's dorsal fin gently and concentrate on floating."

I hung on to Kaede's fin gently as was told, which seemed to be a signal for Kaede to start swimming; Kaede swum quite fast.

Everything was supposed to go as planned. I had a life jacket on, so I was not supposed to drown.

However, I did.

I could not lift my head above the water while in the water.

Kaede was helping me enjoy swimming in the pool by pulling me while I floated, but I could not lift my head above the water.

I was having such a hard time breathing so I eventually let go of Kaede's fin.

That was when I began to drown!

There was no question about it; I was drowning. Since I had a camera strapped around my forehead, I later got to see how things went; then, I noticed Kaede was watching me, looking worried.

However, the drowning also proved that the private lessons at my swimming school were not wasted. Although I was having trouble breathing, I was swimming. Near me throughout the whole time was Kaede, swimming around me. Kaede really cheered me up. She then helped me swim across the pool to its edge.

I only swam for about a couple minutes or so, but those few minutes became an experience to remember throughout the rest of my life.

Everyone first looked worried but then they began to smile. So I thought that was the end of the dolphin swim program. However, the farm keeper then said, “Next, you can hang onto Kaede’s pectoral fin.”

“I’m alright. That’s it for me,” I said.

However, she told me, “No. I want you to experience this.”

The farm keeper was smiling, but she looked very determined.

“Next, we will have Kaede turn upside down. It will be like riding on her belly, so you don’t need to worry about holding your head out of the water. Don’t worry, it’ll be fun!” the farm keeper said.

So another round of swimming while holding onto one of Kaede’s fins began.

Following this round, I had an opportunity to swim with

Me drowning!

Sakura while holding onto her pectoral fin.

This time I was able to actually enjoy the experience! As Kaede did, Sakura also let me hang onto her pectoral fin while she swam around the big pool.

With two successful swimming experiences, I came to trust dolphins and feel a strong friendship between them.

Subsequently, as I mentioned earlier, the Resort decided to open another dolphin farm in Shimanami Kaido, and Momo and Yuzu were transferred to the new farm.

So on May 6, 2015, only a few days after the opening of Dolphin Farm Shimanami, I went to see Momo on a business trip to gather information.

At the new farm, I got to reunite with the farm keeper who had helped me understand the fun of swimming by hanging onto a dolphin's pectoral fin. Although I only met her once before, I felt like being reunited with an old friend. I was so happy to see her again that if I were an American, I imagine I would have hugged her. However, since I am a Japanese man, I did not do such a thing that could have given her the wrong impression.

Because I knew through a phone call that Momo had been transferred to the new farm, as soon as I arrived, I thought to myself, "So where is Momo. I wonder if she's doing alright."

Immediately after that, quite a far distance away, I saw a dolphin jump.

The dolphin was Momo. As soon as I met her face to face, I spoke to her in my heart, "It must have been a long trip for you to get here Momo." Then, I felt a warmth radiate from Momo. People may tell me I am just imagining things, but no matter what others may think, I know that Momo remembered me and was happy to see me.

Her feelings were communicated across and resonated in my heart.

After meeting Momo, Yuzu, Kaede, and Sakura, dolphins and whales came to occupy a special place in my heart. Subsequently, I met a number of orcas and humpback whales, who convinced me that they were not communicating with words but with vibrations.

After these experiences, whenever I have trouble concentrating

while meditation, the vibrations of dolphins appear inside me and help me concentrate. When I turn my heart toward myself in the dimension of death and suffer to the degree of screaming, through the darkness inside me come swimming a number of dolphins and lead me toward the right way.

Unless Taike sensei said that day, “Mr. Kiryu, I want you to try talking to dolphins and whales,” I would not have actually experienced communicating with them without words but vibrations.

In addition, that same year, in 2015, Taike sensei passed away on December 5.

Up until those experiences with dolphins and whales, such concepts as the world of consciousness, the universe, natural disasters, moving onto the next dimension, and turning one’s heart toward oneself in the dimension of death all felt like pieces of a puzzle for me to put together inside my head. In other words, the concepts felt like a puzzle that I was not part of. However, now they planted their roots deep inside me and become my own themes.

In addition, I finally identified what the mysterious worrisome feeling that had been coiling inside me like a snake had been. It was the fear of death. However, death, past and future lifetimes, moving onto the next dimension, and natural disasters are no longer castles built in the air; now I can actually feel that they are real.

The incident where I ran away from Mount Asama (not to

be confused with the Asama-Sansō incident) has now become my starting point, and what Taike sensei asked me to do that day, saying, “Mr. Kiryu, I want you to try talking to dolphins and whales,” has become the greatest gift I ever received.

There still are many things I do not understand about this study.

However, now I can say with my whole heart, “Tomekichi Taike, I believe in you 100 percent.”

Reference

<Natural disasters>

Asamayama Tenmei funka shiryo shusei 1 (Activity of the Tenmei Eruption of Asama Volcano Part 1); Diaries / Edited by Susumu Hagiwara /Gunma Prefecture Cultural Project Promotion Association /1985

Tenmei Asamaoshi nihyakkaiki kinenshi (Journal Published in Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of Tenmei Asamshi) / Edited by Susumu Hagiwara/Committee in Charge of Implementing the Tenmei Asamain 200th Commemorative Project/1983

Tsumagoi, Nippon no Ponpei saishin zouhoban (Tsumagoi; the Pompeii of Japan; Newest revised edition) / Comprehensive Examination Committee of Villages Buried Under the Foothills of Mount Asama/Tokyo Shimbun /1983

Heiankyo no saigaishi (History of Disasters undergone by Heian-kyō) / Masaki Kitamura /Y oshikawa Kobunkan/2012

Hōjōki (The Ten Foot Square Hut) / Kamo no Chōmei (Edited with footnotes by Kazuhiko Asami) / Chikuma Shobo/2011

Ezu de yomitoku tensai no nihonshi (Reading the History of Natural Disasters in Japan, Aided by Drawings) / Edited by Michifumi Isoda / Takarajimasha/2015

Teika meigetsuki shisho (Personally Selected Pages from

Sadaie's Diary) / Yoshie Hotta/Chikuma Shobo/1996

Rekishi wo kaeta kazanfunka—shizen saigai no kankyoshi (Volcanic Eruptions that Influenced the History of Japan—a Historical Account of Natural Disasters) / Hiroyuki Ishi/Tosui Shobo / 2012

Kagaku no me de miru: Nippon retto no jishin, tsunami, funka no rekishi (Seeing through the Eyes of Science: The History of Earthquakes, Tsunami Waves, and Eruptions of Japan) / Susumu Yamaga/Bere Shuppan / 2016

<Death>

Truth in Love and Death / Kayo Shiokawa/UTA Book/2017

The Wind in Universe—Do we, humans, end when we die? / Kayo Shiokawa/UTA Book/2017

Anata, konomama shinde itte iinodeshoka? (Are You Sure You Have Nothing You Are Supposed to Do Before You Die?) / Kayo Shiyokawa/UTA Book/2009

Daini no jinsei—rasuto chansu desu (Life after Retirement—This Lifetime is Our Final Chance) / Kayo Shiyokawa/UTA Book/2009

Shi towa nanika: shinutoki, watashitachi no karada ni naniga okiteirunoka (What is Death: What Happens to Our Bodies When We Die) / Newton/2019

Shitowa nanika: Ieru daigaku de 23 nen renzoku no ninki kogi

(What is Death: A Course that Has Enjoyed Popularity among Students for 23 Consecutive Years at Yale University) / Shelly Kagen/Bunkyosha/2019

Tokubetsu jugyo: shi nitsuite hanasou (Special Course: Let's Take about Death / Co-authored by 17 writers, including Masana Izawa/Kawade Shobo Shinsha/2013

Chibetto shisha no syo (The Tibetan Book of the Dead)/Shinjo Kawasaki / Chikuma Shobo/1989

Tsuratusutora wa kou katatta: jo, ge (Thus Spoke Zarathustra) / Iwanami Bunko/1967

Tenshoshita kodomo tachi: Vajinia daigaku 40 nen no zense kenkyu (Children who Reincarnated: 40 Years of Research into Reincarnation at the University of Virginia) /Jim Tucker/Nipponkyobunsha/2006

<Quantum mechanics and the heart>

Penrose no ryoushi nou riron (Beyond the Doubting of the Shadow) / Roger Penrose/Tokuma Shoten/1997

Kokoro wa ryoushi de katareruka: 21 seiki butsuri no susumubeki michi wo saguru (The Large, the Small and the Human Mind) /Roger Penrose /Koudansha/1999

*Nou to kokoro no ryoshiron: ba no ryoshiron ga tokiakasu kokoro no sugata (*Quantum Theory of the Brain and Heart: The Heart as Approached from the Perspective of

the Quantum Theory of Space) / Mari Shibu and Kunio Yasue/Koudansha/1999

Ryoshi shinka: Nou to shinka no nazo wo ryoshirikigaku ga toku! (The Evolution of Quanta: Solving the Mysteries of the Brain and Evolution from the Perspective of Quantum Mechanics) / Johnjoe McFadden/Kyoritsu Shuppan/2003

Ryoshirikigaku de seimei no nazo wo toku (Solving the Mystery of Life from the Perspective of Quantum Mechanics) / Jim Al-Khalili/SB Creative/2015

<The flow of consciousness and moving onto the next dimension>

Ishiki no nagare (The Flow of Consciousness) / Tomekichi Taike and Kayo Shiokawa/UTA Book/2012

Zoku ishiki no nagare: saigo wa meisou desu (The Flow of Consciousness Part 2: The Final Step is Meditation/ Tomekichi Taike and Kayo Shiokawa/UTA Book/2016

Love, One within Oneself / Kayo Shiokawa/UTA Book/2015

Along with Mother Universe / Kayo Shiokawa/UTA Book/2017

Love, Homeland in the Heart / Tomekichi Taike and Kayo Shiokawa/UTA Book/2014